Growing resistance: Taro as the symbol of postcolonial Hawaiian identity

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A thesis presented to

the faculty of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology

University of Canterbury

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In partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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by

Charles Pipes

February 2020

HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

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Ref: HEC 2019/55

23 August 2019

Charles Pipes
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Dear Charles

The Human Ethics Committee advises that your research proposal "The Culture of Kalo: Indigenous Taro Cultivation in Modern Hawaii" has been considered and approved.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have provided in your emails of 10th June and 20th August 2019.

Best wishes for your project.

Yours sincerely

Dr Dean Sutherland
Chair
University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee

Abstract

Taro is a root vegetable that has held important dietary, spiritual, and social roles with Native Hawaiian culture for centuries. The cultivation and management of the taro plant was a significant foundation of ancient Hawaiian society. Following the 19th century Western colonization of Hawaii, and the ensuing degradation of the indigenous culture, taro cultivation went into a steep decline as a result of land alienation, commercialization, and resources being designated for alternative, non-native crops. In the years following annexation by the United States, there was a growing Hawaiian identity and sovereignty movement. This thesis examines how taro became a potent symbol of that movement and Indigenous Hawaiian resistance to Western hegemony. The thesis will examine taro's role as a symbol of resistance by analyzing the plant's traditional uses and cultivation methods, as well as the manner in which Hawaiian taro was displaced by colonial influence. This resistance, modeled after the Civil Rights Movement and American Indian Movement in the United States, used environmental, spiritual, and cosmological themes to illustrate the Hawaiian movement's objectives. Taro cultivation, encapsulating nearly every aspect of traditional Hawaiian society and environment, became a subtle form of nonviolent protest. To examine taro farming from this perspective, the plant's socioeconomic, spiritual, and biological aspects will be explored. By examining taro cultivation through this lens, this thesis intends to further explore the cultural and political narratives of resistance within marginalized indigenous groups such as the Native Hawaiians.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my family for their support during this project.

A special thanks to my mentor and friend, Dr. John Strait, without whom this thesis would have been impossible. You taught me to be a better student, a better teacher, a better person. Save me a place on the *lānai*.

A very special thanks to Professor Ava Fujimoto-Strait. You talked me into this and saw me through to the end. You were consistently there to provide translations and new perspectives…and to respond to my late-night panicked messages. I could not have done this without you and your family. Thank you for teaching me *aloha ʻaina*. See you in the Jeep.

Most of all, I would like to thank the Hawaiian farmers, teachers, students, volunteers, and community members that taught me how to grow *kalo* and *mālama ʻāina.* This thesis is dedicated to you all. *Mahalo nui*.

I would also like to thank my supervisory team, Dr. Steven Ratuva and Dr. Alison Loveridge, for their guidance and patience.

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Glossary

ahupua'a	subdivision of *moku*, running from the mountains to the sea
ʻāina	the land
ali'i	native leaders; ruling class
aloha ʻāina	love of the land
ʻauwai	irrigation ditches
hā	breath; to breathe
haole	non-native Hawaiian, specifically white foreigners
heiau	shrine or temple
hula	traditional mimetic dance
huli	to turn; top of a taro corm used for replanting
ʻili 'āina	subdivision of *ahupua'a*
kalo	taro
kānaka	person; Hawaiian
kapu	taboo; sacred; prohibited
kauhale	group of houses
kia'i	protector; guard; caretaker
kino lau	many bodies; earthly forms taken on by the gods
konohiki	middle-level chief who manages land on behalf of a higher chief
Kumulipo	sacred creation chant and genealogy of the Hawaiian kings
kupuna	elders or ancestors
limu	seaweed
lo'i	irrigated wetland
lo'i kalo	irrigated taro paddy
lū'au	party or feast

mahele	divide; division; reference to land division act in 1848
mahi'ai kalo	taro farmer
maka'āinana	common people, as opposed to chiefs or spiritual leaders
mōʻī	highest chief or king; ruler over an island
moku	fragment; largest subdivision on an island
mokupuni	an island
ʻōʼō	to pierce; digging stick
ʻoha	taro corm
ʻohana	family
ʻokana	subdivision of land comprised of several *ahupua'a*
piko	navel; umbilical cord
wai	water
waiwai	assets; value; wealth

Chapter 1: Introduction to Hawaiian taro and resistance

Taro, a root vegetable uniquely important in Hawaii, has held certain spiritual, culinary, and social roles for centuries. As such, particularly following the 1970s and the rise of the Hawaiian sovereignty and identity movements, taro has taken on another role for the Hawaiians – that of a symbol of resistance to colonial influence. In this thesis, I intend to outline taro's role in pre-contact and post-contact Hawaii and how that lends to taro's allegoric value within Hawaiian resistance to Western hegemony. This thesis is not intended to be an exhaustive examination of the Hawaiian taro industry, nor is it strictly limited to the Hawaiian sovereignty movement; rather, this is an analysis of how taro's historic function serves as the foundation for the plant taking on a symbolic identity of resistance.

Thesis overview and objectives

The objectives of this thesis are as follows: 1) to explore the implications of taro as a symbol of resistance; 2) to critically examine how themes of indigenous resistance and traditional agricultural practices connect to daily Hawaiian life; and 3) to explore the historical context of taro's cultural significance and how the plant lends itself as a modern symbol of Hawaiian identity and resistance to colonialism. These objectives will be explored by examining taro in several contexts. An analysis of the practical and cosmological roles of taro in pre-contact Hawaii will serve as the foundational narrative, establishing taro's prominence in Hawaii. This will encapsulate the manner in which the

practice of taro farming is emblematic of Hawaiian cultural values and identity. Additionally, my examination of the for-profit industries that have dominated Hawaii in the last two centuries will demonstrate taro farming as a form of resistance. By illustrating the manner in which Hawaiian taro was displaced, and the means by which it has been revived, I will demonstrate that the practice is antithetical to the hegemony of Western industries.

Rationale and justification

The broader philosophical rationale for examining this topic is to explore how cultural and political narratives of resistance of subaltern groups such as the Native Hawaiians can be understood in the context of global dominant discourses. In this era of neoliberal dominance, indigenous rights and cultures are overshadowed by hegemonic norms. Often, indigenous cultures have their historical and cultural narratives rewritten to legitimize a hegemonic power. In the case of the Hawaiians, prevailing narratives portrayed the Native Hawaiians as backwards and the United States as a pastoral caretaker of the islands (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2014). It is becoming increasingly critical to understand how and why indigenous people resist global neoliberalism and corporate hegemony.

Witnessing firsthand the issues facing contemporary Hawaii, and having worked on taro farms where it was apparent that the practice was about so much more than just producing food, I chose to examine an underdeveloped idea – the connection between taro and resistance. In doing so, I hope to make a unique contribution to a larger body of knowledge from a relatively understudied viewpoint. Hawaiian identity and resistance is a

subject that has been thoroughly explored in many contexts, including land tenure, sovereignty, and resource management. Additionally, Native Hawaiian taro farming practices have also been well documented, with a divided emphasis on Hawaii before and after Western contact. The gap in the literature is in the intersection of taro farming and resistance. This notion has been explored in a few key texts; however, it is frequently referenced as supporting evidence to a broader argument and not fully addressed. I intend for this study to help rectify that gap as well as open up new areas of research concerning taro and resistance in the context of broader global issues.

Context overview of taro and identity in the Indigenous Hawaiian perspective

Defining Hawaiian cultural identity is a problematic endeavor. Modern Hawaii, as we know it, is one culture inclusive of several others. Initially settled by Polynesian seafarers, Hawaii constitutes the northernmost islands of Polynesia. Depending on the source, the date of Polynesian settlement of Hawaii ranges from the 3rd to the 10th century (Iyall Smith, 2006; Kirch, 1985; McGregor, 1995; Stannard, 2004, p. 5). The islands experienced a drastic change in culture following the 18th century contact with Europeans and the subsequent colonization by the United States. The culture across the islands became one comprised of American, European, Asian, and Polynesian traditions.

Roughly a decade after becoming a US state in 1959, Native Hawaiians initiated a movement emphasizing their ancestral identities in the face of cultural displacement. At this point in history, Native Hawaiian culture was but a remnant of what it once was. The Hawaiians followed themes of resistance movements on the mainland, particularly the

Civil Rights and American Indian Movements. This was a resistance movement forged in the Hawaiian connection to the land, as the initial protests were anti-eviction demonstrations. The movement quickly attracted other fragments of the Hawaiian community, most notably those involved in agriculture. It is my argument that the symbolic forefront of this movement is the ancient Hawaiian practice of cultivating *Colocasia esculenta*, commonly known as taro.

Kalo, the Hawaiian word for taro, is a plant central to the identity of Native Hawaiians. While taro as a food source is not exclusive to Hawaii, nowhere else in the world is it as revered and fundamental to a culture. The University of Hawaii bulletin, Taro Varieties in Hawaii, states, "…nowhere has it [taro] attained so much importance as in the Hawaiian group" (Whitney, Bowers, & Takahashi, 1939, p.6). For the ancient Hawaiians, it was a critical food source, upon which they were completely dependent. Over a millennium, the Hawaiians developed and maintained a unique relationship with the plant exclusive to the Hawaiian Islands. The isolation of the islands, paired with the limited availability of edible carbohydrates, earmarked taro as the most precious source of food on the islands. The management of the plant dictated nearly every aspect of Hawaiian society, from resource administration to such fundamental social concepts as economics and community. As such, taro took on characteristics far beyond that of a staple crop and is at the foundation of Hawaiian spirituality. The plant was of such importance that it was literally considered a family member. According to the Hawaiian creation myth, further detailed in the following chapter, taro is the elder brother and caretaker of all humans. The plant transcends mankind's earthly existence, illustrating the Hawaiian concept that humans are part of an inextricable relationship with their environment. This intersection of

spirituality and sustenance, in relation to taro, is at the core of native Hawaiian identity. This is not a new assertion and is not without evidence. Where this thesis is concerned is how the practice of taro cultivation is an expression of Hawaiian identity and an overt act of resistance to the outside influences that toppled the traditional Hawaiian culture.

Before 1778, Hawaiians enjoyed an isolated existence, their outside contact being limited to the other islands of the Hawaiian archipelago. Even then, each island was an autonomous "nation" unto itself. The sequestered Hawaiians were rapidly pitched into the broader world with the arrival of Captain James Cook in 1778. The next century would see the Hawaiian culture warped, and systematically dismantled, by a number of influences. Throughout the 19th century, European, Asian, and American powers would realize, and enthusiastically exploit, the commercial and political benefits of the Hawaiian Islands. Concepts of society, economics, and politics that were previously alien to the Hawaiians would be forcefully introduced to the islands. At best, these imposed notions awkwardly paired with those of the Hawaiians and created hybrid cultural mainstays; at worst, the foreign concepts completely displaced Hawaiian ideals and subjugated the people and environment in the name of profit. This contributed to the erosion of indigenous Hawaiian culture. Traditional principles of communal natural resource rights gave way to profit-driven privatization, bolstered by Christian ideology and secured by military armaments (Kame'eleihiwa, 2004, p. 79). Individual farming homesteads were amalgamated into sprawling monoculture plantations powered by imported labor and legitimized by foreign courts (Osorio, 2001). Hawaiian dietary customs were displaced in favor of the preferred, and profitable, foods of the imperialists. The result, arguably still in development, was a hybrid culture at conflict with itself – indigenous meets imperialist. A profit-driven

capitalist system was shoehorned into an environment ill-suited to sustain it. The Hawaiians became a conquered people, the islands a conquered nation.

As is characteristic of imperial subjects, Hawaiians have an ambivalent relationship with their imposed culture. In some respects, it is embraced. In others, rejected or met with apathy. However, there has been a growing movement of native Hawaiians that are nostalgic for their traditional heritage; that is, there is a longing for "the old ways" introduced by their Polynesian ancestors. On a chain of islands popularly marketed with imports, notably pineapples, ukuleles, and resorts, there has been a return to the ways before the *haole.* [1]

Hawaiian fervor for these traditional ways has manifested itself as a broad-based social movement twice. The first occurrence emerged in the 1860s. Though not referred to as a "renaissance" at the time, it was the first instance of a collective effort to emphasize indigenous Hawaiian culture as a means of resistance. This movement was largely a native response to growing threats from US political and commercial interests that were maneuvering to annex Hawaii as an American territory (Kanahele, 1982; Williams, 2014). This annexation was gradually being guaranteed from the 1850s to the 1890s through a series of American legal manipulations that privatized Hawaiian land and natural resources, imported foreign labor, and climaxed with the dismantling of the Hawaiian monarchy.[2]

[1] *Haole* is the Hawaiian word for non-native Hawaiian people; more broadly, white people in general.

[2] Historically, the Hawaiian Islands, though geographically adjacent, were autonomous "nations" independent of one another. Hawaiians were people from the Island of Hawaii, O'ahuans were people from the Island of O'ahu, and so on. In 1810, King Kamehameha I successfully completed his campaign to unite the eight inhabited islands, bringing them all under the control of one monarch. It was a short-lived experiment in Hawaiian monocracy that would not survive the 19th century; though it is the basis for the singular entity we know as Hawaii.

The Hawaiians attempted to counter these changes with a cultural revival that promoted the traditional ways of life while simultaneously demonstrating their ability to uphold a modern monarchy, notably through widespread use of the Hawaiian language in print media, popular support for the Hawaiian monarchy, and the construction of modern architecture (Silva, 2006; Williams & Gonzalez, 2017). This movement strived to demonstrate to the Westerners that Hawaiian culture was thriving, despite the economic and political changes, and to contest "the discourse that represented them as backward savages incapable of self-government." (Silva, 2006, p. 89). While this movement was concerned with defying the Western commercial, religious, and political authorities, there was a certain amount of amicability being sought. The Hawaiian monarchy encouraged policies in which both sides, the Hawaiians and the Westerners, benefitted. As Noenoe Silva states, "…the *mō ʻī* [royalty or king]…were the most powerful members of the class that both facilitated and resisted colonization…created policies and otherwise assisted the progress of colonial capitalism while retaining their cultural identity" (Silva, 2006, p. 122). Hawaiian defiance, however, manifested itself in open use of the language, *hula* and traditional dances as part of ceremonies, and mass publication of the *Kumulipo*, the genealogical and creation chant (Silva, 2006). It was an endeavor in native resistance; an assertion of identity in the face of an imposing conqueror. Unfortunately, it was no match for the firmly entrenched commercial interests, reinforced by the US government, and protected by the military.

Though the movement never formally "ended", as it never formally "began", it was made ineffective following the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893. Policies were enacted designed to curb Hawaiian nationalism, such as the prohibition of the native

language in schools and the importation of Asian laborers. Some would contend that this early Hawaiian cultural movement simply went dormant until statehood; others would argue that it continued albeit under the pressures of the new US policies.[3] Whatever the case, what is clear is that the movement's message resonated with subsequent generations. The Hawaiian Renaissance, as it came to be formally known, began in the early 1970s. This movement's objectives were not dissimilar from their forebears' and even began under similar circumstances. However, the Hawaiian Renaissance was to take on a more revolutionary tone and dig deep into the Hawaiian past to assert their autonomy (Silva, 2006).

Methodology

Research plan and Human Ethics Committee approval

In my examination of Hawaiian resistance and its connection to native agricultural practices, I went through a lengthy thought process supported by life experiences from three earlier visits to Hawaii and academic texts. Though much contextual information was drawn from texts and historical case studies, I had to reconcile the gap between my topic and previously studied topics in the same field. This was accomplished through an abbreviated, yet highly focused, period of field work involving Hawaiian taro farmers and academics.

[3] Between the 1890s and the 1970s, Hawaiian culture did experience several brief periods of cultural revival focusing on specific themes. Examples include surfing becoming a mainstream sport in the 1900s, Hawaiian style music in the 1920s, and canoe racing in the 1950s. These were sporadic and limited to niche groups (Kanahele, 1982). Often, this was oriented towards a Western audience and projected a vaudevillian undertone (Lewis, 1987).

Compounding with my life experiences and previous knowledge of Hawaiian history and culture was my interval of concerted information-gathering related specifically to the culture surrounding Hawaiian taro. Prior to this field work I completed the formal university processes, specifically the acceptance of my research proposal and approval from the Human Ethics Committee. All field research notes and interviews involving human informants were undertaken in December 2019, following authorization by the Human Ethics Committee, approved in writing through HEC Approval Letter Ref: 2019/55. The corresponding consent forms obtained from participants remain securely on file at the University of Canterbury. At no time in my field work was deception used and I have not quoted, paraphrased, or photographed any participant without their prior approval. On the matter of identifying my Hawaiian sources, I will only be as specific as the islands on which they live and work. Hawaii is a tight-knit island culture and everybody knows everybody. This especially goes for the Hawaiian agricultural community, one of close economic, cultural, and social ties. I have retained anonymity of my sources so as to protect their privacy as prominent members of the local growing community.

Ethnography

The practical, field-based portion of this study was informed by information collected through ethnographic research. Ethnography is a research method where the researcher, or ethnographer, participates "…overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research." (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1996, p. 1). It should also be

noted that “all social researchers are participant observers; and, as a result, the boundaries around ethnography are necessarily unclear.” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1996, pp. 1-2).

Though I was not in field for an extended period time (following whatever standard of time is demonstrative of *extended*), I was immersed in the natural setting of my research topic for a period of time and worked alongside the agents informing my study. Following the definition given above, I was overtly involved in the lives of my informants, making connections between their words and actions and my research topic. This did not always directly involve taro or issues of Hawaiian resistance and social movements. As the participant observer, I was involved to the same extent as my informants. I was immersed in the role of the Hawaiian *lo’i* caretaker. The work, and the research topic, became deeply personal for me, evoking connections to previous experiences I have had in that same sort of work (Davies, 2010).

Reflexivity

Prior to my first visit to Hawaii, like many non-Hawaiian mainlanders, I admittedly had little knowledge about Hawaii beyond it being the 50th state and once its own kingdom. I certainly had no idea of taro’s significance. For me, it was a decorative plant colloquially known as “elephant ears”, commonly found in neighborhood flowerbeds in the southern United States.

As an undergraduate, pursuing an education degree, I was invited by my mentor professors on a field trip to Hawaii in 2016. They had strong ties with the islands, one of them being born there, and would take students to the Island of Hawaii to give them an

education in Hawaiian culture beyond the tourist brochures. I tagged along, primarily for the experience and secondarily to satisfy one nagging outstanding geography credit.

On this trip, I saw Hawaii through a new lens. I saw the physical landscape as more than a rocky archipelago in the Pacific, but as the tops of volcanoes of such awesome magnitude that they were still visibly creating the islands. I saw the culture as a distinct heritage existing within the larger United States, not unlike the Native Americans of the mainland. It was more than beaches and pineapples; Hawaii was an ancient culture refined over centuries that had an engineering and farming culture that rivalled anything in Europe or the Americas. Most importantly, I discovered a deeply spiritual chain of islands. I am not a spiritual person by any means, however there is something intoxicating about the islands. To be so isolated in the world yet so connected to it is quite a feeling. I vividly remember being at the top of Hawaii's highest peak, Mauna Kea, in the pitch black, looking down on the tops of the clouds. Cold, silent, the moonlight illuminating nothing else but the lonely volcano's sister, Mauna Loa, I remember thinking about what it would be like to experience that place as an 11th century Hawaiian. I may not be spiritual but Hawaii taught me how one could be.

The "final exam" for the course was hinted at by our professors as one of exceptional difficulty but of great reward. Coming at the end of the trip, it seemed to be the culmination exercise that would encapsulate all that we had learned and bring it to life for us in one intellectually stimulating, but physically exhausting, lesson. Our classroom was the Island of Hawaii's Hāmākua Coast, the ancient home to the Hawaiian elite and onetime breadbasket of the island (McGregor, 1995). The subject matter was an unassuming plant called taro. After making the hike into the valley, we stepped into a

different world – and back in time. We would, for a brief period, experience Hawaii as it was a thousand years ago.

The first lesson I learned in the *lo'i kalo* is that you cannot do this work alone. It is not possible, even for the most ambitious farmer. There are so many elements to the process, so much to account for, that it indeed takes a village. And that is what I saw. The Hawaiians we were working with worked together in tandem, each anticipating and complementing another's actions. Not only did they know their neighbor, they trusted their neighbor. And that trust was reciprocated, as one farm's success was dependent upon the success of another. Perhaps the brilliance of the interconnected irrigation canals was not limited to civil engineering; there is an underlying social engineering aspect that makes everybody accountable to each other as a community. Proper management of the irrigation canals ensured that a farmer wouldn't wash away the plants or the vital nutrients in the soil - or flood a neighbor's field.

I also began to notice the interconnectedness of the experience. All of the people working, mostly strangers to one another, were telling stories and communicating. Perhaps the strenuous work left us searching for a breath and speaking was the most dignified way to get it. People were laughing, teaching, learning, developing kinship. Imagine how deep that relationship would develop if this were your means of survival and you did this work with the same group daily for generations.

These interdependent relationships were not just amongst the humans. There was so much life in the taro field, interconnected with the existence of another life. I noticed a crawfish poking above the water in which we were farming. They, too, are dependent upon

the taro. Crawfish are scavengers living on the muddy bottom of the taro swamp, collecting bits of plant matter and dead animals. I was not the only one watching the crawfish. On a branch overlooking the *lo'i* shown in in Figure 1.1, keeping a close eye on what was possibly its next meal, was a species of hawk endemic to the island. Nearly every human was watching the hawk. This illustrated to me the interconnectedness of all things and how, at least in Hawaii, taro set the scene. So much was happening in that little drama: dead plants, crawfish, hawks, people, rushing water. And all of it seemed to be happening around taro. Looking at Hawaii following this experience, I found that this ecological network of actors applied on a broader scale across the islands. So much had happened here and taro never seemed to be far from the picture.

Figure 1.1. Lo'i kalo on the Island of Hawaii. The mature plants had been harvested that morning, the retaining walls repaired, and was replanted with the new huli seen in this photo.

In preparing to write this thesis, I reflected on those experiences in Hawaii. Where was I seeing taro and in what context? Its distinctive leaf could be found subtly incorporated into signs and advertisements, mostly for local businesses. Prepared taro, namely *poi,* was a fairly common dish in all parts of Hawaii. Whole plants could be found in yards or as stock at farmers' markets. In the grocery store, taro products were available in modest amounts and not prominently displayed. Those distinctive leaves could yet again be found in the beds of passing trucks, bouncing in the wind and off to either be processed or replanted. It soon became a matter of where taro was not, rather than where it was. The

places where taro featured were not areas around resorts or popular beaches. These signs were not advertising tourist getaways or chain restaurants. These trucks were not labelled with corporate farm logos. This was seemingly an industry by Hawaiians, for Hawaiians. Now, certainly, all were welcome to experience taro. Hawaiians would never discourage a mainlander from trying *poi* for the first time. But it was clear that taro was a product for those, more or less, in the know. Even more, it was used almost as a secret code in those signs and random glimpses of the plant in various forms around the island. A casual glance would indicate a leaf forming the border of a restaurant or shop's insignia. What is being subtly communicated is the connection between that place and the local culture. Perhaps this is entirely appropriate, given that the most valuable part of a taro plant is the root corm, the part that cannot be readily seen.

It became clear to me that taro in Hawaii was about so much more than a niche food source. It was a communication of the human connection with the environment, as shown in Figure 1.2. Taro is entirely representative of Hawaiian history and the Hawaiian condition, if you know how to look at it. Taro's history is a story of what Hawaii once was and how it has adapted to the changes that swept over the islands in the last 200 years.

Figure 1.2. Sign in Waipi'o Valley, Island of Hawaii – "Slow down this aint da mainland". Note the illustrated taro leaf underscoring the sense of place. Waipi'o Valley is the ancient residence of the Hawaiian elite and the onetime breadbasket of the island. This sign serves to remind visitors that they are in a remote and sacred place - respect of the land and locals is expected. "Slow down" is not necessarily referring to your vehicle speed; it refers to the mindset one should bring down into the valley.

Participant observation, community discussions, and interviews

The information supporting this project did not solely come from texts. Practical experience served as both the inspiration for, and informant to, this thesis. In the course of gathering empirical field information for this thesis in December 2019, I relied on the participant observation qualitative method. This method, fundamental to gathering information to produce an ethnography, involves the researcher participating in and observing the activities of the research topic informants, however overt or covert (Davies, 2010; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1996). As the definition of the participant observer method is inclusive of several methods, my specific method was tailored to the needs of this study

(Dewalt, Dewalt, & Wayland, 1998). By immersing myself in taro farms with Hawaiian farmers, I was given insight into their methods, values, and justifications through casual conversation and informal interviews while participating in the tasks at hand. I also participated socially outside of the taro farms and in other relative facets of the lives of my informants. In doing so, I was able "…to collect data in a relatively unstructured manner in naturalistic settings…in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied." (Dewalt, et al., 1998, p. 260). The participant observer method can have varying degrees of participation and observation (Dewalt, et al., 1998). My methodology employees a heavy emphasis on active participation, as the local custom and centuries of Hawaiian culture dictates a "many hands" approach to any task. It would be inappropriate, and detrimental to this study, to simply observe and not assist with the day's labor. Furthermore, I enjoy working on these farms and feel most connected to my research when I am personally engaged with it.

Informants for this study were selected based on their accessibility through my previously existing relationships and their ability to help answer my research questions. All potential informants that I approached agreed to participate and understood that their words or actions may be recorded and anonymously used for this study.

As is the Hawaiian custom, it is essential to talk to people to gain a deeper understanding of a subject. I worked alongside taro farmers, processors, academics, and volunteer groups. They taught me what taro means to them and how growing it is for far more than just food. Growing *kalo*, and teaching others how to grow it, is to provide public education on ecological, and by extension political, issues facing Hawaii. This showed me

the symbolic nature of taro; that a discussion of Hawaii can prominently feature taro yet the plant may never be mentioned at all.

In gathering information for this thesis, I worked with two academics that have a background in Hawaiian culture and issues. With these informants, I developed the contextual factors of contemporary Hawaii. This information included local history and economics, culinary traditions, and cultural considerations. Information from these informants was gathered by accompanying them on their own fieldwork on the Island of Hawaii. On matters pertaining to taro cultivation, I worked with three farmers, all active in running working farms as well as operating nonprofit groups specializing in community education. These farms were on the Islands of Hawaii and O'ahu. By working with these informants on theirs farms, I gathered information on the practical aspects of growing taro, as well as the contextual factors attached to the practice. This context included Hawaiian cultural traditions, current political and economic concerns, and issues facing Native Hawaiians. I was also introduced to a public school teacher/local cultural center employee with connections to local community education projects and native activists. Speaking with this informant produced information regarding contemporary social issues in Hawaii, with an educational slant, and insight into the current demonstrations regarding the Thirty Meter Telescope project on Mauna Kea, Hawaii's most recent issue regarding state and international influences colliding with local cultural interests.

I did not, in the course of collecting information to support this thesis, rely on formal interviews or questionnaires. They are not necessary for the scope of this project and can be detrimental to gathering knowledge about the topic. Hawaiians are talkers and enjoy speaking at length in informal settings. As these pages will reveal, Hawaiians are

justifiably wary of the mainlander handing them papers designed to extract information, if for no other reason than it is not a genuine conversation. To learn about what taro means to Hawaiians, you have to approach it as I did – put on your work clothes and step into the mud. Through volunteer work and on-the-job training, relying on informal interviews, I was taught the practical methods of growing taro. This included maintaining a farm, planting and harvesting, and processing. I was also shown the less tangible side of taro farming – the chants giving thanks for a good harvest, the relationship between the grower and the grown, and the interconnectedness of humans and their environment. I was taught the environmental considerations necessary to ensure a successful harvest, such as the communal water rights and revitalization of land. I was also engaged with people connected to taro farming outside of the farm. I was shown their daily lives and values. I was shown that taro's connections extend far beyond the farm and are woven into the daily lives of many Hawaiians. It was not simply a conversation about a plant; it was an exploration of what it is to be Hawaiian in a culturally obfuscated Hawaii. In the end, all of these lessons and scenes connected to one overarching theme – taro cultivation is a benign, yet apparent, resistance to the degradation of Native Hawaii and an authentic way to maintain that ancient culture.

Visual representations

All photographs included this thesis are my own. Most were taken on public property and therefore do not require permission. A few photographs were taken on private taro farms with the written and oral permission of the property owner. This thesis also contains one hand-drawn diagram of a taro plant. This drawing is a custom design to fit the

needs of this thesis and is an original work created by an undergraduate student assistant. It has been used with this student's permission and cited accordingly.

Community relationships

Underlying all of my research into this topic is my personal relationships with a number of people associated with Hawaii and taro. If it were not for the longstanding friendships with farmers, academics, and community members, this project would not have been possible. This is not unique to the Hawaiian agricultural community; in every part of the world farmers, ranchers, and fishermen are wary of intrusions disguised as good intentions. In Hawaii, the issue is that land tenure and environmental issues are longstanding subjects of contentious debate. These are islands that have a history of land legally disappearing from beneath their feet with an opportune stroke of the pen; trust is paramount.

Access to the field sites was dependent upon relationships and having built trust and rapport with a number of people. I had established this years before as an undergraduate student. Building these relationships was not difficult but it did take time. A genuine love and interest for the land and culture was the foundation of my friendships on the islands. I developed a respect and sensitivity for the Hawaiian culture; I made the realization that these people, though Americans by citizenship, effectively lived in a foreign country. As is the case with so many things in Hawaii, what was ultimately cultivated were relationships born in the *lo'i kalo* that transcended the plant. In a testament to taro's interconnectedness, these people that I met in an academic setting are now personal friends;

we talk about the world and our lives, our conversations not limited to one theme or subject. I have learned a great deal from them and it is an honor to have their influence included in my own academic development.

Analysis and interpretation of data

Sociologists Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson state, “In ethnography the analysis of data is not a distinct stage of the research. In many ways, it begins in the pre-fieldwork phase, in the formulation and clarification of research problems, and continues through to the process of writing reports, articles, and books.” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1996, p. 205). Prior to conducting fieldwork and while building my research proposal, I had planned out much of the information I anticipated collecting. This established many of the questions and potential concerns that could be encountered in the field. This was based on information retained from previous experiences with taro farming and readings I had selected to be included in my research proposal. By no means was this an exhaustive analysis; however, it was enough to build a foundation of connections between literary and practical information.

After collecting field material in December 2019, I made more connections between my own life experiences and various reviewed literary sources in order to establish consistency and credibility. I also analyzed the manner in which my own field findings illuminated taro farming’s specific connection with Hawaiian resistance. As the subject of resistance and taro is one with little dedicated and comprehensive literature, a fair amount of consideration on my part was necessary to connect and expound upon the two themes.

This was assisted by an assemblage of various literary sources that touch on the subject of Hawaiian agriculture, Hawaiian sovereignty, and theories underlying resistance movements. By discovering consistent trends in those texts with my own research, I could further explore taro farming as a form of native resistance, to whatever extent that notion may actually be realized on the islands.

A conceptual narrative of resistance

The theory of resistance is one discourse inclusive of many others. As was shown in previous sections of this chapter, resistance in the particular setting of the United States has taken on many different forms. While the overarching theme of resistance is oppositional defiance to a larger entity or concept, it takes on specific characteristics depending on the circumstances. Sociologist Bryan Wilson has described social movements, meaning the broader collection of agents of resistance, as being cast into four distinct typologies – transformative, reformative, redemptive, and alternative (Cohen & Rai, 2000). However, it should be noted that casting social movements into a distinct category is problematic, as they tend to change with time and are prone to factionalism (Cohen & Rai, 2000). In the case of the Hawaiian resistance movements, categorization in these terms can follow each of the four models, depending on how Hawaiian resistance is framed. For some, resistance is demonstrated by a rejection of American statehood. For others, it is the act of farming a particular plant or changing their dietary habits. Exactly how Hawaiian resistance follows each of the aforementioned categories is not relevant; what should be focused on is that resistance can take on various forms, not fitting any single model.

Thomas Hall and James Fenelon discuss indigenous resistance as falling into four sets of issues, all of which "…illustrate the resistance of indigenous peoples to the forces of globalization, as well as revitalization of their cultural traditions…" (Hall & Fenelon, 2016, p. 21). These issues are the global historical context, the community-based cultural traditions, the spiritual values at conflict with the resisted entity, and the indigenous connection with the environment and its preservation (Hall & Fenelon, 2016). These issues, clearly outlined in Chapter 2, demonstrate what is emphasized in indigenous social movements as well as how the movement is in conflict with a hegemonic aggressor. What is of particular note is the manner in which taro farming encapsulates elements of these four issues as the vehicle for Hawaiian resistance.

The 1960s and 70s were arguably where resistance and social movements in the United States took on a new tone. The "old" resistance methods of political alignment and institutional mobilization were modified in these decades to incorporate new confrontations and issues (Cohen & Rai, 2000; Della Porta & Diani, 1999). Movements around the United States adopted community action methods structured into interest groups (Della Porta & Diani, 1999). This was demonstrated with the Hawaiian Renaissance movement. These "new" emerging social movements, however, were not autonomous creations with independently formed methods. They carried forward fundamental concepts from their progenitor movements. In the United States, the Civil Rights Movement was inarguably the forerunner to other mass action movements in the 20th century. All other movements in the country owe much of their ideological and methodological foundations to the early harbingers of black equality.

To fully appreciate contemporary resistance movements in the United States, it is requisite to understand the foundations of the Civil Rights Movement. Pinpointing the establishment of the Civil Rights Movement is bound to draw a few different responses. The 1954 decision in Brown v Board of Education of Topeka declared racial segregation in public schools to be unconstitutional, thereby solidifying the cause for racial equality as a legal issue (Riches, 2017). The widely publicized 1955 murder of Emmett Till brought national attention to the realities of racially-motivated violence in the South (White, 2018). Bus boycotts and food counter sit-ins demonstrated the efficacy of mass action (Della Porta & Diani, 1999; Riches, 2017; White, 2018). While these events were watersheds in the cause for civil rights, they were not the foundations of the broader movement. These events were the second generation of seeds planted decades before in the farmlands of the rural South.

The era following the American Civil War, and up to the 1950s, is referred to as Jim Crow (Riches, 2017). Characterized as a period of intense racial segregation, Jim Crow was nearly 80 years of a racial caste system legally enforced throughout the United States. The 1868 passing of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution guaranteeing equal legal protection to all citizens notwithstanding, for Black Americans there was a difference between the law in the books and the law in practice. Many of these people that did not move to urban centers and take on industrial professions remained in their antebellum occupation – farming (White, 2018). Black communities coalesced around agriculture. These were communities made up of Americans that were living as second-class citizens in their own country, despite legalities citing otherwise. As such, they came to rely upon each other. They pooled resources such as housing, food, education, and employment

(White, 2018). They were building sustainable communities within a society that did not represent them. These sharecroppers and tenant farmers were the first activists of the Civil Rights Movement.

The communities built by these farmers were in response to economic exploitation and were designed to establish autonomy through self-sufficiency and self-reliance (White, 2018). This was done out of practicality and survival; demonstrations for the sake progress would come later after the movement found its legs. However, in a social system designed to keep these people in a very specific social stratum, possessing food independence meant possessing economic independence. It was a fundamental start to broader changes. Though they lived in a period of brutality and terror, they possessed a certain degree of economic autonomy, however miniscule, and that would be the seeds to generate a social movement.

In examining this form of resistance, sociologist Monica White utilizes the theory of collective agency and community resilience (CACR). White writes, “Collective agency and community resilience (CACR) is a theoretical framework that builds upon and amplifies the social movement concept of everyday strategies of resistance.” (White, 2018, p. 6). She describes this resistance theory as “less confrontational, incurs less repression, and is usually enacted by individuals or small groups” and encompasses “forms of resistance that are often overlooked or overshadowed by a focus on organized social movements.” (White, 2018, p. 6). CACR is comprised of two components. The first being the concept of collective agency, which “involves social actors’ ability to create and enact behavioral options necessary to affect their political future.” (White, 2018, p. 7). The second component is the concept of community resilience, which “refers to the various structural aspects and components of human adaptation to extreme adversity, using

"community" as the unit of analysis." (White, 2018, pp. 7-8). Cooperatively, the two concepts combine into a theory where the individuals' agency and experience lend to the determination of whether or not to resist and expands that agency to include the collective; it further expands to include the community response to changes (White, 2018). CACR, when applied to Jim Crow Black Americans, was demonstrated through the collective pooling of knowledge and resources to ensure survival in a hostile social system. Further demonstrated was the community resilience "in the face of a system that benefits from their exploitation and their oppression." (White, 2018, p. 8).

Social movements "…cannot be thought of as self-contained or separate units…" (Fox & Starn, 1997, p. 9). Social movements, including resistance and revolutionary movements, are in some sense interconnected, whether in theory or practice. The theory of collective agency and community resilience as resistance can be applied in the case of Hawaiians in the 1970s. The Hawaiians, a relegated indigenous community living under imposed constructs, demonstrate resistance through their traditional notions of community and environmental knowledge. The concepts of CACR were brought forward to an era when resistance and activism took on a new form – the "old" social movements approaches combined with the "new". For the Hawaiians, the "old" methods were not dissimilar from what was seen in the early years of the Civil Rights Movement in rural areas. The themes of community centered on the common setting of agriculture was the matrix of resistance. This is the foundation of my argument that the Hawaiians' staged their resistance in a benign, nonaggressive manner. It was not meant to be confrontational; rather, to avoid repression, it operated outside the sphere of accepted social boundaries. However, as noted, it was a new era and resistance was mutating.

In the “new” era of resistance, the 1960s and 1970s, social movements adopted a more outward-facing approach. It was not enough for a movement to assert itself as just a pragmatic response to change. A more symbolic method was necessary so as to dramatically convey the goals of the movement. This is where taro features.

Taro farming is illustrative of those notions of resistance through self-sufficiency and self-reliance. As will be seen in the following chapters, the Hawaiian methods of taro farming are unique to the islands. The plant has served for centuries as the *monetæ communia* and staple food, therefore demonstrating that it can be used as a symbol for economic and food autonomy. In asserting their connection to taro farming and the environment, Hawaiian resistance was demonstrated through “strategies that members of agricultural cooperatives implemented in an effort to stay on the land using their agricultural knowledge base.” (White, 2017, p. 20). In step with their social activist forebears of the earliest years of the Civil Rights Movement, Hawaiians “demonstrated that a community that is able to work collectively, grow its own food, and create a community based on shared goals was threatening to the White political establishment that had long withheld civil and human rights from those who worked their lands.” (White, 2017, p. 20-21).

Hawaiian taro and resistance: A literature review

There is no shortage of literature concerning Hawaiian taro or the sovereignty and resistance movements in Hawaii. However, little exists connecting these two themes. University of Hawaii’s Professor Davianna Pōmaika'i McGregor writes, “Very few

historical accounts document the persistence of Hawaiian cultural, spiritual and subsistence beliefs, customs, and practices in rural areas. Readers are left with the impression that the Hawaiian people have been totally assimilated into American society and have abandoned their own culture." (McGregor, 1995, p. 198)

Before examining the culture surrounding taro, I began with understanding taro as a plant. Compiling preliminary information on the biology of taro and how it is grown provided the foundation upon which the rest of the information would fall into place. Learning about taro's biology introduced the names of the plant's parts, many of them named for Hawaiian traditions and mythologies. The grower's guide, *Taro Mauka To Makai: A Taro Production and Business Guide for Hawaii Growers,* provides practical guidance on growing, processing, and marketing taro, stating "by planting, sharing, and eating taro, you take part in an island tradition that has existed here for hundreds of years" (Evans, 2008, p. 13).

After examining the biology of the plant, it then became necessary to place it within the context of Hawaii. Taro has been grown all over the world for thousands of years so it is important to define the plant within the specific Hawaiian context, where it has a unique role not found anywhere else on Earth. The Hawaiian historian, E.S.C. Handy, has written what could be considered the definitive text on the agricultural and cultural aspects of Hawaiian plants, primarily taro, *Native Planters of Old Hawaii.* Handy emphasizes the native intimacy with their plants and how the local culture and community was shaped by their care and management. Handy states, "…the plants which he [the native Hawaiian] cultivates are highly personal" (Handy et al., 1972, p. 22). Archaeologist Patrick Kirch's *Feathered Gods and Fishhooks* also details the ancient Hawaiian connections with their

environment, with special attention to how their society was structured and functioned in relation to agricultural output. Kirch writes, “The Hawaiian economy centered upon agricultural production, and land-use was linked to a tiered system of land divisions.” (Kirch, 1985).

This led to a particularly sacred element in Hawaii and the fundamental resource for taro farming – land. There are seemingly endless texts devoted solely to Hawaiian land tenure, both before and after Western contact. This stands to reason, as it is a complex issue that remains a source of contention. The anthology, *Land Tenure in the Pacific,* contains a chapter detailing the political land divisions of Hawaii prior to Western contact, stating the relative autonomy and resource sufficiency of each individual partition (Meller & Horwitz, 1987). Law academic Jon Van Dyke’s *Who Owns the Crown Lands of Hawaii* examines the shock to Hawaiian culture following Western contact and the nature of the new order of land tenure imposed upon the Hawaiians. Van Dyke states, “The history of Hawaii is a history of lands moving from the Native Hawaiian People into the hands of others.” (Van Dyke, 2008, p. 1).

From here, it became necessary to compile texts detailing Hawaii’s history, particularly following European landfall. A number of sources were required as the history of Hawaii differs depending on the source. Accounts favoring the natives and those favoring the imperialists often clash with each other, leaving a complicated narrative. Gavan Daws’s *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* provides a detailed explanation of the history of Hawaii from the landing of Captain Cook to statehood (Daws, 1968). Daws’s work provides insight into the various economies that led to Western colonization of Hawaii, illustrating the capitalist venture that came to define the islands in

the 19th century. Ralph Kuykendall's *The Hawaiian kingdom: 1778-1854 foundation and transformation* provides a supplemental text to explain the critical years following Captain Cook's landing. Detailed are the events of the first few decades of the 19th century that would set the stage for the eventual US annexation of Hawaii, such as the elimination of the traditional taboo system and the Western realization of the profitability of developing agriculture in Hawaii. Kuykendall states, "…and the new economic practices inevitably raised questions and generated a sceptical attitude which weakened the foundation of the old system and prepared the way for its collapse." (Kuykendall, 1965, p. 28).

The majority of literature supporting this thesis comes from Hawaiian sources examining local politics, history, and social issues. These are a range of sources including academic texts and technical guides. The Hawaiian voice is critical to understanding themes of native resistance. Davianna McGregor's *Nā Kua'āina: Living Hawaiian Culture* is a compilation of essays telling the stories of various Hawaiians of differing backgrounds and how their lives are connected to the land. The book, titled with the Hawaiian word for back country, illustrates how many Hawaiians strive to carry on the native ways while living in a place that has drastically changed in the last two centuries. McGregor writes, "The persistence of the Native Hawaiian lifestyle…provides an important source of continuity and connection for all Native Hawaiians…to their rich heritage." (McGregor, 2007, p. 142). Jay Hartwell's *Hawaiian People Today* follows a similar theme and model as McGregor. The book illustrates the lives of a few Hawaiians maintaining their culture in a system that once sought to eliminate it. Hartwell describes the loss of culture by describing this scene: "…thousands of visitors sit down to sample a "Hawaiian" lū'au. They heap pork, chicken, and pineapple onto their plates, but they cringe at the thimble-

sized cups of steamed, mashed *kalo*, called *poi*, likening it to wallpaper paste…diners by the hundreds toss it into the trash, missing out on the fundamental pleasure of eating *poi* with traditional Hawaiian foods such as smoked fish and steamed pig." (Hartwell, 1996, p. 3). Ty Kāwika Tengan's *Native Men Remade* examines the effects of the loss of culture native Hawaiians experienced and the local efforts to revitalize it. Also explored are topics of cultural commodification and the obscuring of identity. Tengan writes, "…a very profound sense that most Hawaiians had indeed forgotten what it meant to be Hawaiian…who had grown up during the Territorial and early statehood period of forced cultural amnesia." (Tengan, 2008, p. 76). Noenoe Silva's *Aloha Betrayed* explores historical resistance movements in Hawaii, particularly regarding the period surrounding annexation. Silva also uses this topic to argue against a common myth that the early-19th century Hawaiians were the authors of their own demise, a notion often put forth in Western narratives of Hawaiian colonization. Silva writes, "How is it that the history of struggle has been omitted to such a great extent from Hawaiian historiography? Part of the answer lies in the nature of the colonial takeover itself." (Silva, 2006, p. 2).

With the historic and cultural details of Hawaii and taro firmly established, it was also necessary to consider what sets Hawaiian taro apart from the rest of the world – the cosmological connections. As will be explored throughout this thesis, taro is more than just a food source and cultural mainstay for Hawaiians. The plant carries many spiritual connotations that exemplify its importance in Hawaii. Martha Beckwith is arguably the leading authority on Hawaiian mythology with her book *Hawaiian Mythology*. This source provides interpretation and analysis of the complex and mutable Hawaiian pantheon. It is necessary to understand how and why taro occupies a privileged place in Hawaii and

transcends its human stewards. Evidence for this comes by way of the ancient Hawaiian creation stories, in which taro features centrally.

The broader context of resistance in the United States

When examining the specific topic of indigenous Hawaiian resistance, it is necessary to consider the broader context of resistance and social movements in the United States. When the Hawaiian Renaissance movement formalized in the early 1970s, it did so as an extension of an expansive assemblage of social movements across the country. These movements were comprised of varying actors and ideologies, some even coming into conflict. However, these resistance movements were not independent of each other. Their methods, objectives, and rationales, regardless of how they differed, shared a common bond to earlier resistance movements.

The 1960s and 70s were a period of global upheaval. Specifically in the United States, a series of events would ensure that the 1960s and 70s would forever be associated with turbulence and rebellion in the face of overwhelming power. Views on drugs, education, sexuality, social norms, and the fundamentals of American society would be called into question by a discontented generation. The Vietnam War set the background for contention. The assassinations of activists such as Fred Hampton, Medgar Evars, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr. left indelible effects on the national psyche - that those standing for progress were targets that could be publically, and dramatically, eliminated. The psychologist Timothy Leary sought to expand minds with the therapeutic use of psychedelic drugs; the House Un-American Activities Committee, to limit minds with

paranoid accusations and arcane hearings. Anti-communism underscored public policy and achievement. A number of words would come to be emblematic of the period: Moonshot, Bay of Pigs, Watergate, Great Society, and Woodstock.

If the American 1960s and 70s were known for tumultuous politics and questionable policy, then those years were certainly defined by the resistance to the same. In response to events, domestic and abroad, certain groups began to push back. Anti-establishment, liberation, and protest movements began to appear, not just in the United States and not necessarily ideologically independent of one another. Racial groups, indigenous people, women, environmentalists, and political activists, all disaffected people relegated to the fringes of their respective societies, began to stage various forms of dissent. In the early part of the 1960s, many of the movements, primarily driven by white students, encouraged nonviolence and amicability. For example, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was a decentralized student movement concerned with furthering civil rights causes and promoting participatory democracy. By the end of the decade, the group's methods of dissent took a noticeably more aggressive approach as SDS splintered into numerous factions, the most militant of which was known as Weatherman. [4] The counterculture movement was not limited to white college students, nor was this demographic the core component of the movement. A number of other groups rose from the Civil Rights Movement and formed around ethnic ties, notably the Black Panthers and

[4] Weatherman, later known as The Weathermen and eventually Weather Underground, was a faction that grew out of a faction of the Students for a Democratic Society. Generally regarded as one of the more extreme elements of the 1960s and 70s counterculture movement, a designation largely owed to their 1969 confrontation with the Chicago Police Department and Illinois National Guard in what would become known as The Days of Rage, the group was designated a domestic terror group by the FBI. Weatherman owes its unique name to a lyric in Bob Dylan's Subterranean Homesick Blues – "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows."

the American Indian Movement (AIM). They, too, began to revolt and served as an unwitting inspiration for other ethnic-based resistance movements.

The American Civil Rights Movement is the archetype of ethnic group movements in the United States. It was a diverse movement, with many allies and enemies. It was also guided by differing ideologies. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached a form of resistance that utilized nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience (Riches, 2017). Malcolm X, on the other hand, rejected racial integration and called for Black Nationalism (Riches, 2017). Though the methods and politics differed, the American Civil Rights Movement had one decisive message – equality. Picket signs carried the message "I Am a Man", which was the movement's demand for radical social change. This style of resistance spread to other racial and ethnic groups.

Though the movement for black equality was at the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement, a myriad of other groups were also experiencing the same relegation as Black Americans. The American Indian Movement (AIM) coalesced in the late 1960s to bring attention to poverty, education, and injustice among Native Americans (Hall & Fenelon, 2016; Riches, 2017). The movement quickly brought issues of land reclamation, treaty violations, and cultural preservation into their purview (Hall & Fenelon, 2016; Riches, 2017). AIM's most notable act was their 19-month occupation of Alcatraz Island from 1969 to 1971 to bring national attention to federal policy regarding Native Americans. Simultaneously, Latinos in the United States had been enacting their own movement. Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers championed labor and civil equality for Latinos. The Chicano Movement, *El Movimiento*, like the Black and Native American movements, had

its origins earlier in the 20th century but it was in the 1960s that it become an extensive and energetic movement.

In the early 1970s, two thousand miles away from the US mainland, another group of disaffected Americans living as second-class citizens in their own country saw the relative success of these groups and modeled their own similar movement (Beyer, 2018; Walker, 2005). Many of the mainland movements took to the streets, others to the airwaves. Some utilized the olive branch, others the pipe bomb. Native Hawaiians took up the spade and joined the counterculture.

When the Hawaiian Renaissance emerged in the 1970s, Hawaii had been a US state for a little over a decade and a US territory for just over 70 years. From the end of the 19th century to the 1970s, Native Hawaiian culture had eroded to a nearly unrecognizable state. The language was forbidden in schools (Beyer, 2018). Culinary traditions were supplanted by Asian, American, and Portuguese influences (Laudan, 1996). Formerly communal arable land was earmarked for high-yield crops and housing developments (Kelly, 2004, p. 34). Water, a resource revered by Hawaiians, was commoditized; its former communal status wrestled away from the local leaders through oligarchic privatization laws (Coffman, 2003). The state's economy was powered by imported workers producing profitable non-native crops such as sugar, pineapple, and rice (Coffman, 2003). Many of the Hawaiians not disposed to plantation work were, in an effort to market the "island experience", employed at a new kind of plantation – the luxury resort (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2014, p. 7).

After 1959, the new State of Hawaii saw an influx in tourism and people moving from the mainland. Tourism grew by roughly 20% a year well into the 1970s (Coffman,

2010, p. 11). The permanent population grew as well, by as much as 2.5% every year (Coffman, 2010, p. 11). Land was bought for the construction of sprawling resorts and suburban neighborhoods, most of which Native Hawaiians could not afford (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2014, p. 8). Many Hawaiians were facing eviction from their homes by developers. In 1971, in the Kalama Valley of O'ahu, a group of activists staged a sit-in, refusing to leave their homes (Williams & Gonzalez, 2017). They were shortly after removed by police but not before their message was made clear – defiance through organization was possible.

In line with the American Indian Movement, the Hawaiian Renaissance's flashpoint was a struggle for land rights and connected to broader political issues (Beyer, 2018; Schachter & Funk, 2012; Trask, 1987; Williams, 2014). From there, as noted by Hawaiian scholar Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, "…this shift from class-based land struggle to Indigenous cultural resurgence happened quite organically" (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2014, p. 9). The struggle for land rights began to involve the struggle for other elements critical to Hawaiian culture, thereby bringing other Hawaiians into the fold who would otherwise be outside of the movement. By reclaiming the land, Hawaiians also reclaim the water, as the two are inseparable according to Hawaiian environmental knowledge. This makes the movement relevant to the fisherman, the rancher, and the farmer. Protest movements tend to put forward a symbol of their culture so as to emphasize their defiance while highlighting what is important to them (Della Porta & Diani, 1999). Various factions of the Civil Rights Movement utilized a clenched black fist. The American Indian Movement displayed the red silhouette of a Native American wearing a peace sign as a headdress. In the case of the Hawaiians, the movement adopted symbols of ancestral kinship and the environment.

These themes were manifested with symbols such as taro leaves, *poi* pounders, and Hawaiian words associated with farming and the environment printed on leaflets and banners (Trask, 1987).

This growing movement of Hawaiians rejected imperial dominance in a seemingly peaceful manner, just as their ancestors a generation before had done: they began doing things the Hawaiian way. They spoke their language, chants were passed from one generation to another, *heiau* were restored, the traditional contexts accompanied *hula* demonstrations, and "talking story" once again became a community unifier (Williams, 2014).[5] Hawaiian musicians, with their distinct musical styles and environmentally-oriented themes, became artistic amplifiers of the movement. Chants and the traditional modes of spirituality became prevalent outside of tourist spectacles. Though the revitalization of these pieces of culture brought attention to the movement, it changed little about how Hawaiians lived and worked in their ongoing post-colonial environment and how they would engage with the effects of colonialism that had long loomed over Hawaii.

The common "island paradise" image of Hawaii is the product of an aggressive marketing scheme perfected over the 20th century oriented towards drawing tourists. While this promotion does indeed incorporate components of traditional Hawaiian culture, such as traditional carvings and *hula* and surfing, it is in fact ultimately a post-colonial marketing gimmick intended to transform a nonwhite culture into a source of profit. Heavily

[5] "Talking story" is a Hawaiian Pidgin term for storytelling, gossiping, and chitchat. Hawaiian is a culture of oral traditions and semblances of this past are shown in the Hawaiian affection for lengthy chats with friends and family. This may be explained by the fact that the Hawaiian language was spoken-only before Western contact; writing did not feature until the 19th century (Iyall Smith, 2006). Telling stories in the native language saw a particular renewal with the Hawaiian language becoming a component of the public education curriculum in 1978.

racialized and eroticized, “it reflected the dominant ideology of mainland American culture, while trivializing and ridiculing the Hawaiian identity.” (Iyall Smith, 2006; Lewis, 1987, p. 171). What the marketed image of Hawaii omits, perhaps intentionally so as to appease the target audience, is the most prominent aspect of traditional Hawaiian culture that is completely at odds with the values of Western hegemony - Hawaiians, traditionally, are farmers. And as such, before Western contact, “the Hawaiian socio-political system was the most complex and highly developed in all of Oceania and that its evolution was made possible by and was dependent upon agricultural intensification and surplus production.” (Clark, 1986, p. 1).

It is my argument, and the purpose of this thesis, that the Hawaiians’ boldest statement of defiance was the revitalization of growing taro in the traditional methods. It is an act that exemplifies spiritual, economic, and social independence as well as bolsters those traditional concepts of kinship and attachment to the land. Taro symbolizes everything that was taken from the Hawaiians. To revitalize its cultivation is an act of defiance.

Overview of thesis chapters

As a whole, this thesis will examine taro and indigenous Hawaiian resistance following the most prominent dichotomy in Hawaii’s history – the islands before and after Western contact. This first chapter served as the introductory text. In this chapter, I outlined my research question, goals, and general context of the topic. This chapter also included a review of some of the texts supporting my arguments, a cursory narrative of how I came to

pose this particular research question, and what it may contribute to the larger body of knowledge. Chapter Two examines Hawaiian society in relation to taro prior to Western contact. This chapter provides a comprehensive background of taro's role in Hawaiian society, with some reference to how these practices and beliefs translate into the contemporary world. Chapter Three focuses on taro and Hawaii following the 1778 contact with James Cook. The overarching theme of this chapter is taro's stark decline immediately following Western contact and its resurgence in the last few decades of the 20th century. Chapter Four serves as the conclusion, where I reflect on what I was and was not able to accomplish in this thesis. The conclusion will also outline the manner in which I answered my own research question, as well as postulate questions for future research.

Chapter 2: Taro and pre-contact Hawaii: The historical basis of resistance

Introduction

Almost all societies formulate certain customs based on the management of a natural resource. After all, that resource provides something vital and is worth attaching certain regulations and ways of life to. However, some societies develop a uniquely close bond with a particular resource. Its management transcends an economic or environmental mainstay; the many facets of daily life are traversed by a single omnipotent resource. Understanding how to employ and sustain this particular resource becomes a part of the local culture. The effect is the development of what education academic Ladislaus Semali describes as indigenous literacy. Semali writes, "Indigenous literacy is…a competency that individuals in a community have acquired and developed over time – part experience, part custom, religion, customary law, and the attitudes of people towards their own lives and the social and physical environment." (Semali, 1999, p. 103). In the case of the Hawaiians, this a body of knowledge created out of necessity to solve daily problems (George, 1999, p. 80). Through time and circumstance this indigenous literacy grew to encompass nearly every aspect of the culture, to the point so as to be largely indicative of that culture and their priorities.

This chapter will examine the sociology of taro in four scopes: the family, the larger community, *kapu* and laws, and Hawaiian spirituality. Of course, these elements are not independent of each other and to understand one necessitates understanding another. By

examining taro's social influence in the aforementioned order, we can gain a holistic understanding utilizing a bottom-up approach. In doing so, it is my intention to emphasize the relationship between Hawaiians and taro in pre-contact Hawaiian society. Themes of how their communities were organized, how decisions were made, how resources were allocated and managed, and how agriculture influenced Hawaiian cosmological beliefs will be explored. Understanding and connecting these fundamental concepts of taro will cast further light on how taro came to stand as a symbol of Hawaiian identity.

From a sociocultural standpoint, meaning the interconnectedness of culture and society, taro is linked to every Hawaiian custom and institution. Law, economy, taboo, and gender roles are a handful of the social doctrines defined by taro. This further extends to the Hawaiian notions of identity and autonomy. There is an inextricable relationship between the plant and the people. So much of Hawaiian culture is wrapped up in taro that removing it is tantamount to a loss of identity. This erosion in cultural identity can, and did, result in Hawaiian resistance to the Western institutions responsible for displacing the plant and by extension the culture. As will be shown, attempts to regain and assert that culture, as has been seen in Hawaii since the 1970s, will prominently feature taro as a cultural mainstay and a symbol of resistance. This will be further explored in the following chapter. For the purposes of this chapter, the reasoning behind why taro became such a symbol will be established. By establishing taro's importance as a plant, we can better understand its symbolic role.

The family farm and the roots of resistance

To understand taro as a symbol of resistance, it is requisite to understand why taro means anything at all to the community doing the resisting. And with that, it becomes essential to appreciate what taro means to the individual family units. In this section, we will examine the basic biology of the plant and its importance to the individual and the family.

For all of their splendor, the Hawaiian Islands were not well-suited for sustaining humans prior to Polynesian landfall. Hawaii offered little sustenance, save for fish, crustaceans, birds, and a surprisingly tasty kind of algae called *limu.* The approximately 2500 mile gap between the archipelago and the nearest landmass was too great for most plants and animals to cross, save for sea birds and a few varieties of plants they carried with them (Laudan, 1996). Additionally, the only native mammal was a small bat (Kirch, 1985). Almost everything useful as a source of food for humans has been imported, whether by the colonialists of the last few centuries or by the ancient Hawaiians themselves (Kirch, 1985). Taro was one of these imports. For the Hawaiians, their isolation and limited resources produced a need for taro (Müller, Ogneva-Himmelberger, Lloyd, & Reed, 2010). There were not many alternative food sources on the islands that could feed so many while simultaneously being sustainable.

Transporting taro across vast distances was a long-ago perfected science, as the plant's journey across the Pacific from Asia matches that of its human stewards. Great confidence was placed in the plant by the Polynesians as they sailed to what is arguably the most isolated chain of islands on earth. Though equipped with other foods from their native islands, such as pigs, chickens, breadfruit, dogs, yams, and coconuts, taro was

destined to become a prestige crop for the new Hawaiians – and the first of Hawaii's many culinary traditions (Abbott, 1992; Kirch, 1985; Laudan, 1996; Pollock, 1992). The careful transplantation of taro to Hawaii was indicative of the voyagers' plan for a long stay in a new land. [1] Further, the Hawaiians were not trading with anybody outside of the eight islands of the archipelago and there was a low probability of the ocean or a migratory bird introducing a new plant species that would be equally viable. Hawaii was a self-sustaining culinary isolate.

This dependence on taro, very nearly a sort of mono-cropping, may be worrisome in other parts of the world. For the Hawaiians, it was ideal as they had also imported their ecological and agricultural knowledge. This indigenous knowledge coupled with an environment that worked in their favor. Taro was perfect for them; one would not be admonished for thinking that taro was made just for Hawaiians. The plant is well adapted to the Hawaiian environment and is a reliable source of food. It grows remarkably well in Hawaii and is subject to only a handful of pests and diseases that are reasonably manageable. It is transplantable, versatile, and has hundreds of varieties so as to break up the monotony and add value of one sort or another (Whitney, Bowers, & Takahashi, 1939).

Borrowing from the taro creation myth which we will examine later in this chapter, taro culture operates on the principal that big brother *kalo* takes care of little brother *kānaka*; however, little brother must fulfill his reciprocal obligation. The plant's best interest was aligned with, and dependent upon, that of its human stewards. A farmer said

[1] It can be inferred that these explorers intended to make a one-way trip, regardless of where they ended up, due to their on-board stores of breeding pairs of animal stock and transplantable provisions.

to me, “It [taro] needs people. And we need it. We domesticated each other.” As Maui farmer Kyle Nakanelua states:

> The lifestyle of taro is one of discipline and care and affection. In one word I would sum it up as religious. Not the dogmatic blind faith robotic unconscious drudgery. But a pragmatic, dedicated, committed and continuous act on a daily basis that is serene, solemn and thus sacred. A taro lifestyle dictates that one must organize and plan his/her daily life around the caring of taro forever. Your thoughts of taro will greet you in the morning and the accomplishments of your day will put you to sleep at night. (Taro Security and Purity Task Force, 2009, p. 17).

Taro is a generic term referring to four plants of the family *Araceae*. Of the four, *Colocasia esculenta* is arguably the most prevalent in Hawaii, though the others are not without use. One of the earliest domesticated foods, taro is thought to have originated in southern Asia (Pollock, 1992). It spread, west to east, to Southeast Asia and its dispersal across the Pacific follows the same path as humans (Yen & Wheeler, 1968). It is primarily grown as a root vegetable, as the most edible and nutritious part is the root corm. The leaf and stem are also used in various dishes.

Taro is almost completely propagated by the human hand, as seeds are rare in nature (Pollock, 1992). When a plant is harvested, to guarantee future plants, a bit of the stalk attached to the top of the corm is cut. This is called *huli* and is the basic material for future planting. This process is demonstrated in Figures 2.1 – 2.6. *Huli* are remarkably resilient and were the material by which taro was brought to Hawaii. In dryland planting, the *huli* are placed in the ground deep enough to cover the base of the corm. This planting method

generally takes 8-12 months to mature and be ready for harvest (Abbott, 1992). In wetland and flooded planting, the *huli* is planted in water roughly 10 centimeters deep, ensuring that the base is submerged (Pollock, 1992). Wetland taro generally matures in 6-12 months (Abbott, 1992). In both methods, taro does not need to be harvested immediately. The plant is happy enough to remain in the mud for months after maturing. This was key to Hawaiian long-term food management plans; a characteristic of most agrarian societies where a harvested surplus was not necessarily beneficial. The Hawaiians took what was needed, as it was needed, thereby ensuring a steady source of food remained in the ground.

One of taro's deficiencies is in its tendency to rot quickly after being harvested. It needs to be processed and prepared within days of being pulled from the ground. It is prepared in a number of ways, though the most popular and uniquely Hawaiian method of preparation is the dish known as *poi.*[2] However it is prepared, taro is noted for its health benefits with a carbohydrate content up to 29% and a protein content up to 7% (Pollock, 1992). Dr Terry Shintani writes, "The traditional diet of Native Hawaiians (consumed before Western contact) was high in fiber, high in complex carbohydrates, high in the ratio of polyunsaturated to saturated fatty acids, low in fat, and low in cholesterol." (Shintani, Hughes, Beckham, & O'Connor, 1991, p. 1647).

[2] It is important to note that taro must be prepared in some manner, whether by pounding, boiling, or baking. Raw taro is loaded with tiny crystals that, while not particularly dangerous, are rather unpleasant to eat.

Figure 2.1. Harvested taro plants to be processed. These plants will be disassembled into their three useful components - huli, corm, and leaves.

Figure 2.2. Harvested taro plants in mid-processing. The background plants are intact from harvesting. The foreground plants have had their corms removed.

Figure 2.3. Newly processed huli. These huli are being stored in large buckets (visible in Figure 2.2) and can either be prepared for replanting immediately or stored away to be sold or planted later. Note that the crown of the corm has been left intact on the bottom of the stalk. This is the basic material by which a new crop can be planted.

Figure 2.4. Huli being preserved in the mud prior to planting. It should be noted that this is not a planting site; rather, it is a method to keep the huli alive until it the plant is strong enough to be planted in the lo'i. Think of this as a huli nursery. This would have been the ancient method utilized onboard the boats bringing taro transplants to the Hawaiian Islands.

Figure 2.5. Huli being preserved in the mud prior to planting. Though this image gives the appearance of new plants alongside old plants, it should be noted that the huli, right, are older than the mature plants, left. Many of these plants could have been planted and harvested dozens of times, a testament to taro's sustainability and the Hawaiian mastery of regenerative agriculture.

Figure 2.6. Harvested corms ready for processing. This is the root bulb and the most valuable and nutritious part of the plant. Shortly after this photo was taken, the corms were earmarked for processing into poi to be sold to locals that had previously placed an order; the profits from this are put back into the farm's education programs.

Taro just has three requirements to fulfill its role to its human stewards: light, water, and work. The sun adequately accommodates the first requirement. Regardless of planting method, taro requires sun all day and temperatures ranging between 70°F and 86°F, consistent with the average year-round Hawaiian temperature (Evans, 2008). The second requirement is met with the islands' plentiful rainfall, though the human hand is required to guide the water to the plants; humans and the environment work side by side to achieve this condition. Non-flooded taro requires between 50 and 120 inches of rain per year (Evans,

2008). The amount of water required for flooded taro depends on the size of the *lo'i* and the number of plants. However, the average requirement for a single flooded plant ranges from 1.2 to 12 gallons of water per day (Evans, 2008).[3] That leaves the work, entirely the responsibility of humans.

Many of the intra-familial connections common to Hawaiian society, such as gender roles and child rearing, were guided by the demands of taro and the *kapu* system, which will be explored later in this chapter. Before the 19th century, women were prohibited from most aspects of taro cultivation and processing. All children, however, were expected to participate in a support capacity by helping to carry materials, assist with small tasks, and provide food (Handy, Handy, and Pukui, 1972). This was a sort of apprenticeship for all children, particularly older boys who would be learning how to one day start their own farms or manage the family farm. In this manner, farming also served as a medium by which older generations passed on indigenous knowledge to children (Taro Security and Purity Task Force, 2009). An unnamed farmer states, "When I am tending the *kalo*, I am also tending to my ancestors, the *kupuna* who came before me and those still living who I now feed. I love my *poi* – it tells me everything because I was raised on it." (Taro Security and Purity Task Force, 2009, p. 17). The particular case of a Maui man named Sam Kaha'i Ka'ai Jr. is described by Hawaiian anthropology professor Ty P. Kāwika Tengan. Tengan writes, "In Ka'ai's case, practicing the real Hawaiian culture brings order to his own

[3] A 2005 United States Geological Survey report noted that the median water requirement for a Hawaiian flooded taro *lo'i* was 270,000 gallons per day (Evans, 2008).

disrupted models for family, work, production, and community – those things that define him as a man." (Tengan, 2008 p. 177).[4]

The connection between family and taro is further illustrated in the Hawaiian nomenclature for various parts of the plant, as shown in Figure 2.7. The Hawaiians named the bud that sprouts from the corm, which will grow into a shoot that can be replanted, *'oha*. When the suffix *–na* is added, the word means offshoots (Handy et al, 1972). The word *'ohana* is also the word for, and concept of, family for Hawaiians. The family is seen as continually growing and sustainable. The core of the family gives new life, which will one day give life of its own, just as the transplantable shoots of the taro corm will do.[5] The distinctive spot where the petiole meets the leaf is called the *piko*, or navel. Aside from vaguely looking like a human navel, it carries connotations of the beginnings of new life contained in the umbilical cord between mother and newborn.[6] The stem of a taro plant, the part that is called *huli* when replanted, is called *ha*. This is also the word for breath or wind, as the plant tends to gently bob in the wind. *Ha* also carries a social connection, as it is the traditional Hawaiian greeting of sharing breath, performed by two people placing the bridge of their noses together and inhaling.[7]

[4] The disruptions Tengan refers to is the degradation of Ka'ai's Hawaiian culture and the imposition of Western practices.
[5] Sometimes the *'oha* is informally referred to as the *keiki*, or children.
[6] The symbolism surrounding the navel appears in a few places in Polynesian culture, such as in plants or the summits of mountains. It is meant to symbolize kinship and the connection between old and new life.
[7] It is thought that the Hawaiian word for white people, *haole*, owes its etymology to this practice. The root words *ha*, meaning "breath", and *'ole*, meaning "without", were combined to form a word for people that did not understand the concept of sharing breath.

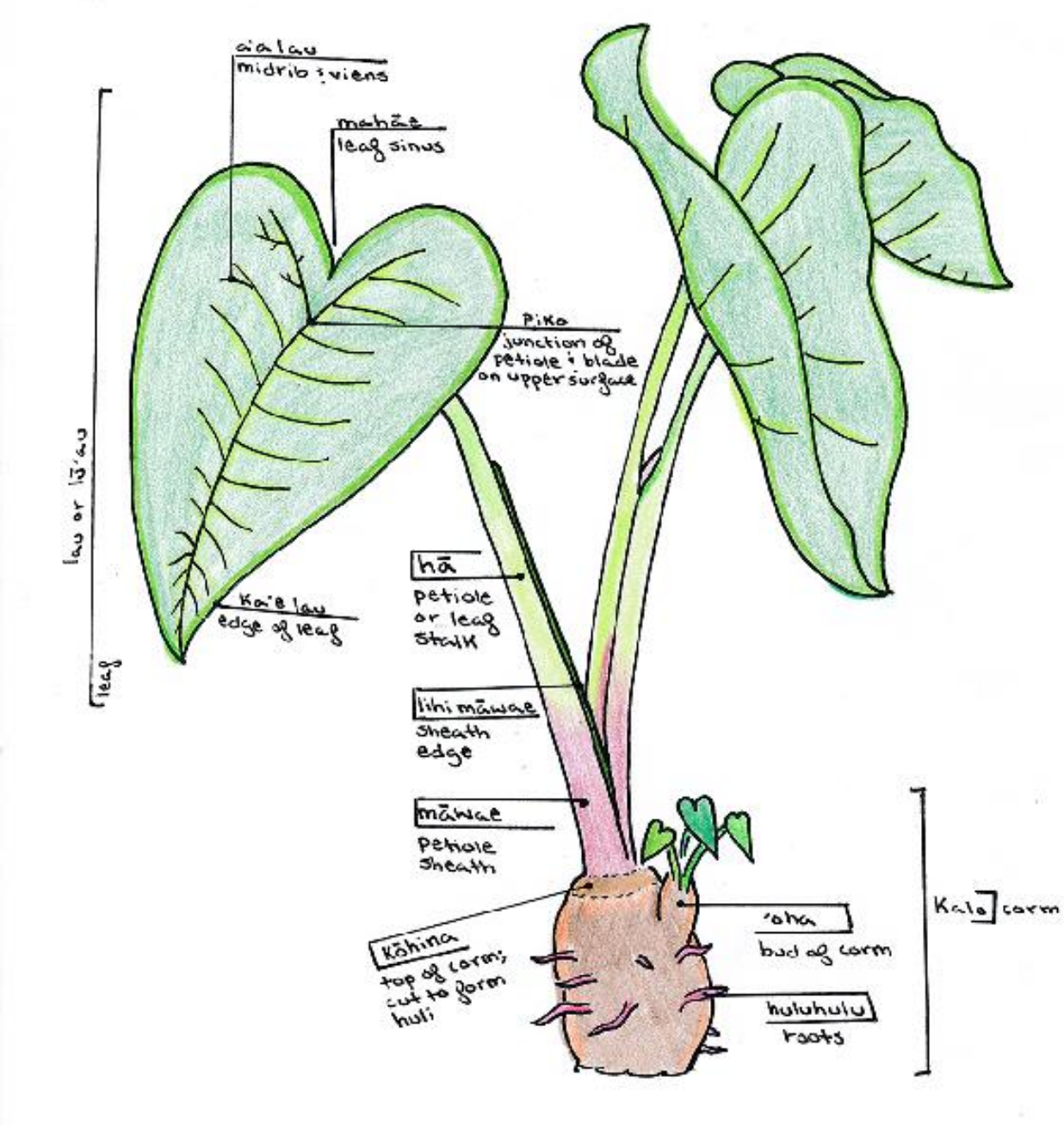

Figure 2.7. Taro nomenclature in English and Hawaiian. Illustration by Tracie Miller, based on a design by scientific illustrator Eliza K. Jewett and modified for the purposes of this paper (Jewett, 2004).

The modern taro cultivation methods differ from ancient times only in terms of volume. Taro is still planted and harvested the way it always has been – manually. A planter named Robert Kahele living in the Waipi'o Valley in the mid-20th century remarked, "Backbreaking, you know, pulling [taro]. That's not easy, not mechanized." (qtd. in Kodama-Nishimoto, Nishimoto, & Oshiro, 2009, p. 153). In the case of dryland taro, some success has been had with mechanization, primarily in harvesting. However, mechanization is useless, if not detrimental, to the preferred method of irrigated swamp taro (Plucknett, Ezumah, & de la Pena, n.d.). Machinery tends to get stuck or damages the retaining walls. When planting *huli*, a planting machine would be too large and clumsy to delicately place the stalks into the mud. For harvesting, the harvester would likely damage the precious stalks and leaves and could potentially leave the corm under the mud, breaking the plant in half (Plucknett et al, n.d.). Of course, some modern technology is used, largely with transportation and land maintenance such as tree felling and rock removal. But when strictly focusing on reaping and sowing taro, the height of technology is the *ʻoʻo*, shown in Figure 2.8. It is a stick, not unlike a large broom handle with a wedge-shaped point, used to turn over mud, dig holes, or pry a mature taro plant out of the ground by severing the roots from the corm.[8]

[8] For one farmer I spoke with, the *ʻōʻō* actually was a sawed-off broom handle. The man using it quipped, "Low tech is the way to go. If I break it I can just use the other half of the broom".

Figure 2.8. A demonstration of the low-tech, highly-versatile 'ō'ō. This tool can be used to dig a hole for planting new plants or for prying the corms up from the mud during harvesting.

Sustaining these traditional methods is heavily emphasized in current Hawaiian education programs and the taro growing community (Taro Security and Purity Task Force, 2009). It illustrates their connections to the past. To take part in any facet of taro cultivation, you gain a sense of appreciation for the Hawaiian connection to the land. You also understand why the environment, and taro in particular, would be at the forefront of any movement emphasizing Hawaiian culture and identity. To work with taro is to be intimately connected with the environment. The focus is not on controlling a machine that is carrying

the burden; rather, the individual is focused on their own body and how it is relating to its surroundings. Every action is deliberate and premeditated. It is an immersion in an ancient tradition, often chest deep in mud. The fundamental planting methods have evolved little because they have no reason to evolve. It's completely utilitarian and, simultaneously, deeply spiritual. For this reason, I assert that the family taro farm is the cradle of "Hawaiianness". The individual taro farm was the foundation upon which the broader community connections were built. It becomes evident that, with so much occurring on one individual farm, the cultural implications of the assemblage of dozens, hundreds, of farms are far reaching and fundamental to the Hawaiian culture. The family farm is a microcosm of the larger community; the kiln in which its bonds, values, and priorities are forged. And the nucleus of this tiny island universe is taro, whose roots transcend any Western notions of boundary lines and extend to the broader community.

What is demonstrated in this section is taro's fundamental place in the hearth and home. These are the smallest units of Hawaiian resistance to Western influence. American social activist Abbie Hoffman once wrote, "The only way to support a revolution is to make your own." (Hoffman, 1968, p. 188). Resistance begins with the individual and, for the Hawaiians, taro is as close to the individual as the family. Figuratively speaking, taro is indeed a part of the family. Though a resistance must begin with the individual, to succeed it will eventually have to spread to the broader community. In the next section, we will examine how taro connects individuals with their larger society, metamorphosing individual opposition into extensive social resistance.

Kalo as a community unifier

Ancient Hawaiians made their socio-cultural decisions based on the needs of their most valuable food source, taro. Consider the various technicalities involved with farming taro, or any plant. The land needs to be appropriated and worked. Water needs to be sourced and transported. Certain considerations need to be made for adjoining parcels of land, for certainly the agricultural activities on one will have an influence on another. There is also the matter of what will be done with the plants once they are grown and harvested.

Underlying these more apparent elements are the legal, spiritual, and social strata considerations having their own less perceptible influences. Even further is the environmental knowledge and engineering prowess, which every farmer must have some degree of familiarity with, at the root of every taro plant that was ever harvested. It becomes evident that taro is equally represented in "the three inseparable dominions of landscape: nature, production, and culture" noted by biologist Victor Toledo (Toledo, 1991, p 10). What is demonstrated is the multifaceted nature of Hawaiian taro agriculture. It extends to every part of life on the islands. It involves everybody living there in one capacity or another. The interconnectedness involved to grow and harvest just one plant is endlessly complex. Numerous connections are forged to ensure agricultural success and the overall wellbeing of the society. And given the life-sustaining importance of taro for the Hawaiians, these connections were not just out of convenience - they were critical.

A woman that grew up on a farm on Hawaii Island in the mid-20th century was quoted, "You know, before, there were many Hawaiians living there in Hōnaunau. When it was time for planting taro, everybody got together to help to plant taro." (qtd. in Kodama-Nishimoto et al, 2009, p. 53). To understand taro as a symbol of resistance we must

understand how it binds the community. Most resistance movements are comprised of members with some degree of commonality, whether it be ethnic, ideological, or class. This was shown in the 1970s and 1980s with the Hawaiian movement's connections to the American Indian movement and anti-nuclear activists across the Pacific (Trask, 1987). Within Hawaii itself, the Hawaiian movement began as an anti-eviction protest and grew to encompass fishermen, farmers, educators, and skilled tradespeople. Taro and its associated elements are themes that most Hawaiian people have some association with. To better illustrate this, we will examine the pre-contact Hawaiian society and how taro was woven into nearly every facet of daily life.

Hawaiian society was completely dependent upon the ecosystem; if the ecosystem was degraded, the society would follow (Gon & Winter, 2019). Therefore, it was necessary for Hawaiians to share a common attachment to the land. The Hawaiian environment provided the fundamental elements to a successful taro crop – arable land, massive amounts of governable water, and an endless stream of sunlight. All that was left was the human element – the labor. This is demonstrated with the individual family farm. The staggering amount of work involved with managing a taro farm cannot be overstated. In effect, taro farming becomes a collective effort interwoven throughout the community. A farmer said to me, "If we in Hawaii want to grow food, it has to be community driven." He went on to say, "It is like a Midwest barn raising…the community is better for having the barn even if it doesn't belong to everyone."

This community reliance is amplified by the islands' relatively small sizes. If everybody in the community is a taro farmer, then everybody benefits from a cooperative endeavor. For the ancient Hawaiians, it was everybody's responsibility to ensure a

productive crop – helping your neighbor was helping yourself. One cannot manage an entire *lo'i* alone; they need the community. What developed was a massive farming, and by extension engineering, cooperative. The management of a single plant dictated how the community would function and govern itself, directly defining such fundamental social concepts as value and wealth, land partitioning, social hierarchy, taboo, law, governmentality, and religion. This was not simply a plant. Taro was omnipotent.

Hawaiians did not see land as a commodity that could be owned by humans (Van Dyke, 2008). It was owned by the gods, administered by the chiefs, and managed by everybody. The concept of one sibling taking care of the other, as with taro, is also applied to Hawaiian ecological practices. The land was a family member, and you couldn't sell or trade it any more than you could a relative. An unnamed farmer was quoted, "It's a mind shift from economic income and a commodity to priceless treasure. You understand you have to take care of the *kalo* and the resources will flow from that.*"* (Taro Security and Purity Task Force, 2009, p. 16). However, an earthly administration system was in place to partition the land into manageable pieces. At the largest level was the individual island, *mokupuni,* a nation unto itself. Each island was divided into wedge-shaped districts called *moku* that ran from the geographic centre to the ocean. *Moku* were subdivided into *ahupua'a* like a pie - radial lines were drawn from the centre of the island extending to the ocean (Trask, 1999). *Ahupua'a* were managed by *konohiki,* land agents appointed by the chiefs responsible for collecting tribute and organizing work projects (Clark, 1986). *Ahupua'a* was the most important administrative division and, as such, was not of any particular size or population (Morgan, 1948).The only fundamental requirement for drawing the metes and bounds of an *ahupua'a* was that it be reasonably self-sufficient and

able to supply all necessary natural resources, denoting the Hawaiian propensity for careful attention to resource management and distribution (McGregor, 2007; Meller & Horwitz, 1987). With the exception of times of war or a natural disaster, resources within an *ahupua'a* were managed so that the entire population lived at the subsistence level (Meller & Horwitz, 1987).

The *ahupua'a* was further subdivided into the smallest administrative tract of land division, *'ili 'āina*, which are the individual family farms managed by the commoners (Abbott, 1992).[9] In general, Hawaiians differed from their other parts of the Pacific in that they did not live in densely populated villages. Though some villages of moderate size did exist, they were scarce as they were not conducive to the agrarian culture on which they were so dependent.[10] Instead, Hawaiians tended to live in small dispersed housing clusters, *kauhale*, allowing room for land and resources (Clark, 1986; McGregor, 2007).[11] The people were distributed around their resource bases.

The entire system was managed by a redistributive hierarchal structure of control but it should be noted that it was not a serfdom. There existed only the ruling elite and the commoners; there was no middle class (Clark, 1986; Iyall Smith, 2006). Commoners were not bound for life to a specific plot of land, although they were free to remain as long as they wished. If a commoner, *maka'āinana*, felt they were not being treated well by the *konohiki* they had the right to move to a farming parcel administered by another *konohiki*

[9] Though not within the scope of this thesis, it should be noted that there are Hawaiian words for even smaller divisions of land, including individual fields, patches, and common areas.
[10] Certain social taboos, such as separate eating quarters for women, also demanded dispersed living space.
[11] It is my own assertion that this custom was a key reason behind why Hawaiians not only did not assimilate into the 19th century Western plantation culture, they flat out rejected it.

(Morgan, 1948; Van Dyke, 2008). The *maka'āinana* possessed a fair amount of collective bargaining power and it was in the local chiefs' best interest to rule with a certain degree of benevolence (Iyall Smith, 2006). A chief without subjects is hardly a chief at all. Trask writes, "The genius of the mutually beneficial political system of pre-*haole* Hawaii was simply that an interdependence was created whereby the *maka'āinana* were free to move with their *'ohana* to live under an *ali'i* of their choosing while the *ali'i* increased their status and material prosperity by having more people living within their…domain." (Trask, 1999, p. 5). Additionally, the chiefs' functions were not entirely unlike the modern bureaucrat. They were expected to administer and govern. And like the modern bureaucrat, they had little time or skill for more practical contributions such as farming or building. The chiefs were completely dependent upon the *maka'āinana* for food and labor (Kirch, 2012; Silva, 2006). This symbiotic relationship was grounded in practicality and bolstered by the will of the gods.

The administration of land was accompanied by the management of the Hawaiians' other important resource, water. *Wai*, water, is obviously a vital component of growing taro and was an invaluable resource for the Hawaiians, as it is to every culture. For the Hawaiians, water does not just feed their bodies, it feeds their taro (Penn, 1980). Like land, water belonged to the gods and therefore belonged to everybody and nobody (Abbott, 1992). Water was also the standard by which Hawaiians defined wealth. The Hawaiian word for wealth and importance, *waiwai*, exemplifies the value of water by repeating the word for it twice. Moses Kealoha, growing up in the economically disadvantaged, working-class neighborhood of Pālama near Honolulu, states, "And our parents used to tell us, preach to us, we were wealthy. We were wealthy because Hawaii had everything we needed

and more. You know, you could go anywhere, you never starve. The thing was to identify, recognize what's around you, and then learn how to prepare it." (qtd. in Kodama-Nishimoto et al, 2009, p. 157). Because water was apportioned throughout the entire population via a complex system of irrigation canals, it also became a central element in Hawaiian law (Greenwell, 1947). [12] These legal concepts carry over from the cultivation necessities of taro.

Hawaii is one of the few places on earth that utilizes such extensive irrigation for taro crops (Penn, 1980). In most places with widespread taro cultivation, such as India, Samoa, and Nigeria, the dryland growing methods are preferred and are primarily watered by rainfall. Hawaiians, however, reserve dryland methods for the highlands and are more inclined towards irrigated pond fields, as seen in Figure 2.9. These pond fields, *lo'i,* require an immense amount of flowing water. Continuously flowing water is necessary so as to bring oxygen to the densely-planted *lo'i* as well as prevent plant diseases. The *lo'i* cannot be filled with water once and expected to sustain. A constant source of moving water must be attached to the farm, for the sake of the one *lo'i* and all adjoining farms (Müller et al, 2010). One study showed that a taro field of 870 - 12,200 square feet requires 1.47 – 66 gallons per square foot per day (Penn, 1980). Because natural waterways could not be expected to flow through every place that Hawaiians lived, they instead routed the water to themselves via irrigation canals called *'auwai*.

[12] So sacred was water that one of the crimes that merited a death sentence was the tampering with water and its associated infrastructure. I was told a story that, in ancient times, if you were found guilty of tampering with a dam, you yourself became part of the dam. I cannot confirm the veracity of the story but it certainly emphasizes the status of hydrologic infrastructure.

These canals are the products of a brilliant engineering tradition devised independently by the ancient Hawaiians and was the most advanced agricultural system in the Pacific (Hartwell, 1996). E.S.C Handy writes, "Pioneers [to Hawaii] could not have brought with them their knowledge of terracing and irrigation for only vestiges of such systematic agriculture existed in the [Pacific]." (qtd. in Taro Security and Purity Task Force, 2009, p. 12). So widespread and efficient were these *'auwai* that it allowed pond field taro to be planted in nearly every part of the islands that received adequate rainfall without relying on natural waterways (Abbott, 1992).[13] Many farms, a few I have worked on, utilize irrigation canals and locks that were originally built centuries ago. Flowing water through *'auwai* connects communities and generations.

[13] This, of course, refers to the wetter windward sides of the islands. Though the drier leeward sides did grow wetland taro, there is some evidence that these areas had to adapt to other less water-dependent crops.

Figure 2.9. Flooded mound method of planting near Kāne'ohe, Island of O'ahu.

The community connections are exemplified in the management of the vital freshwater sources. Maintaining these irrigation canals is as much a part of the taro farmer's responsibilities as managing the plants and soil. A single stream could be the water source for dozens, even hundreds, of individual farms. As the water flowed through one farm, nourishing the *kalo*, it would continue on to the next to do the same. It is easy to see how one greedy or careless person could negatively affect this relationship. The farm downstream from yours is relying on your competence and attention to detail, and you are relying on the same from the farm upstream. On a farm on the island of Hawaii, while harvesting mature taro, the owner asked me to find some rocks and dam up the irrigation

stream before we began pulling the plants out of the *lo'i.* She explained that we would be kicking up a lot of sediment that had settled on the bottom and it would be carried down to the next farm. The valuable nutrients, and anything potentially harmful to the plants, in the mud would be carried away from her farm and to the next. Additionally, the next farm downstream could be in a different phase of planting and a sudden influx of water or sediment could be potentially detrimental to their plants. Somewhere between science and art is the taro farmer's ability to know when to properly throttle the water, with consideration for their own farm and that of their neighbors'.

The planting and harvesting of taro is indicative of strong community connections, as illustrated in a slightly different context in Figure 2.10. Though this may be repetitious at this point in the thesis, it bears emphasizing – farming taro is not an individual effort. It takes a community. It takes a village to raise a taro plant; the requisite communal effort was described to me by a farmer as "the unspoken rule". A bowl of *poi* is the aggregate of many hands turning, to borrow from the local growers' adage "always keep your hands turning". I have witnessed the need for many hands just to accomplish a small task on a farm in Hawaii. In one planting session I was a part of, it took twenty people nearly 6 hours to harvest a few hundred plants and replant the *huli*, in a *lo'i* no bigger than a city bus. The work is hard and you come out filthy. However, an interesting kinship is formed amongst the working party, many of whom are strangers to one another brought together by the farmer or organization managing the land. To mitigate the backbreaking work, people begin to tell stories and sing.[14] In between labored breaths, people open up to one another.

[14] Interestingly, many of the stories that the Hawaiian farmers were telling us seemed to downplay the communal nature of the work and amplified taro's mythical status. These were stories of old planters and their superhuman feats in the taro fields. One particular story was about an 80 year old

If nothing else, they have one thing in common – the task at hand. This commonality creates a bond that connects them to each other and to the ancient Hawaiians.

Figure 2.10. This sign greets visitors stepping off the trail into the Pololū Valley, Island of Hawaii. Pololū Valley is the northernmost of a chain of seven valleys, concluding with Waipi'o Valley, on the island's north coast. In ancient times, Pololū Valley was the site of largescale taro production and produced a red variety, the most sacred of all taro. In recent years, it has become a popular tourist destination, renowned for its black sand beach. As such, the human footprint has become more apparent. This sign reminds visitors to pack out their waste and respect the land. Additionally, given the valley's ancient taro farming tradition, the sign emphasizes the value of teamwork and community to preserve this sacred place.

man that had worked in taro fields all of his life. He could harvest "over a thousand pounds before 10:30"; his methods were "efficient artistry…poetry in motion…fluid."

Almost every detail of modern taro cultivation, save for some technological advances, is reminiscent of Hawaiian traditions reaching back for centuries. The owners of the *lo'i*, in the Hawaiian tradition of sharing and caring for those that care for you, provide food and drink for everybody involved. If the task for that day is to prepare the *lo'i* for planting new *huli*, everybody would mill about knee-deep in water in the pond field, laughing and singing and getting to know one another. Food and drink, singing, socializing – that backbreaking labor just became a small party. A farmer described this occurrence to me as "the grey line between work and play." What is less apparent is that everybody is subtly preparing the *lo'i* for planting by "stomping the bottom"; a process necessary in packing down the valuable mud and nutrients into the foundation where the *huli* will soon take root (Hartwell, 1996).[15]

If the task was to harvest mature plants, a ternary assembly line would be assembled. In the *lo'i* would be a group selecting the plants to be harvested and pulling them from the mud.[16] They would pass the plants to the next group, who would use the *lo'i* water to clean the mud off and pull the roots off the corm. This group also serves as a sort of quality control, identifying plants that could use a bit more time in the mud or ones that would be better suited as fertilizer. Their job is to make the final group's job all the more easier. After cleaning the plant and pulling off the roots and damaged leaves, they would pass the taro on to the final stage of field processing. This group would be separating the corms

[15] Dr. Handy refers to this as a "day of treading". Under any name, it is a comical sight to see *haoles*, who have not yet developed their *lo'i* legs, do everything they can to stay vertical (Handy et al, 1972, p. 93).

[16] This requires some force from a gentle hand, so as to separate the roots from the mud without breaking the plant in half. Additionally, as is the Hawaiian custom owing to taro's tendency to rot quickly after harvesting, only the number of plants needed would be harvested.

from the stalks. It is an impressive sight as skilled hands, using only a simple kitchen knife, quickly breaks the plant down into its three useful components – the corm, the leaves, and the stalks. One man I witnessed doing this, sitting on an old crate with three large buckets in front of him and his headphones on, seemed to be in a trance while performing the repetitious motion. He told me, "I like them [the buckets] set up like this. It's like a drum set, ya know, and this is my stage. You can't think about it, you just do it."

For one person, or even just a few people, this outwardly simple process of pull-clean-cut could take hours, even days, and little would be produced. And this is without consideration to the ancillary tasks that often require more time and effort than planting and harvesting, such as weeding and maintain retaining walls. While I was helping to clear an old planting site, a farmer remarked, "We are in the mundane state of pulling weeds until we get on our feet. It's not always making hay." I responded by asking what the desired grass height is. Another farmer overheard me, laughed, and responded, "If the grass is on your heels, it is already too high. Always weeding."

For Hawaiians, taro is the connection with their present community and their past; with the physical and cosmological environments. It is interwoven across their society and always has been. Everything about taro is fundamentally Hawaiian so it is little wonder that it is symbolic of resistance. Nearly every foreign industry and culture imposed on the islands since Cook's arrival stands in stark contrast to the Hawaiian way. At best, these burdens were relatively benign cultural distortions intended to promote tourism or real estate. At worst, they were a malicious reshaping of Hawaiian principles and environment so as to momentarily bolster profits. To grow taro is to stare down this capitalist culture and assert that humans and nature are inextricable; to care for one is to care for the other.

As Raj Patel states, "Alternative forms of knowledge about nature were seditious…Indigenous knowledge constituted existential threats to capitalism." (Patel & Moore, 2017, p. 61). The rigid tenets of capitalism were incompatible with the equally rigid guidelines that dictated pre-contact Hawaiian society.[17] Where the former sought to extract as much capital from the environment as possible regardless of the consequences, the latter endeavored to sustain a society with careful attention to the consequences. It was a matter of differing priorities – one valued profit for profit's sake, the other valued sustainability for survival's sake. The capitalists in Hawaii operated under, and around, laws organic to a profit-driven society. The Hawaiians, however, functioned within a construction of laws that drew influence from the physical and cosmological worlds, where the conservation of resources and the appeasing of the gods drew equal weight. It is difficult for this writer to simply designate these laws as such, provided the ethereal tone they tend to convey. Using whatever Western term we choose to define it, *kapu* was indeed the law of the land in Hawaii before the arrival of Cook. Drawing from the Hawaiians' realization that the environment, the gods, the ruling class, and the people all must be adequately sated, *kapu* set the guidelines for Hawaiian society – and arguably created the Hawaiian psyche adverse to the Western order that would one day visit her shores.

Created by the collective of individuals connected by taro is the broader Hawaiian community. We have examined the deep social connections based on the management of a single plant. Taro itself was the backbone of the ancient Hawaiian economy, serving as the "currency of finance" and even as the peasantries' primary form of tribute to the ruling

[17] Admittedly, where pre-contact Hawaiian laws and taboos favored environmental sustainability and communal welfare, there was a glaring omission of social equality particularly in regards to women. However, that is another paper.

class (Earle, 2012, p. 96). Hawaiian society was built around the taro plant. When this society was displaced following European contact, the new order was foreign and counterintuitive. In every way, Western influence was contradictory to Hawaiian culture. Though Hawaiian society was displaced, very nearly to extinction, Hawaiians did not simply forget or abandon the old ways. They continued to live as they had done for centuries – and that is their community-based resistance.

Hawaiians were master horticulturalists (Kanahele, 1986). They had a strong functional knowledge of plant husbandry and were experts at selective breeding, particularly of taro. Sources vary but nearly all agree that the Hawaiians cultivated over 300 varieties of taro (Evans, 2008). A farmer told me that each village could have its own distinct variety and, if it were in an isolated area, that variety could die with that community. Of course, not all of these varieties were created equal. This does not necessarily diminish the use of one variety in comparison with another; they simply had different applications. Different varieties of taro were bred for the various micro-ecosystems.[18] For those living in the high altitudes, varieties suited for dryland planting were preferred; the same went for those living in the lower, wetter areas. Some taro plants were valued for their medicinal properties. I was shown a particularly valued variety that had the tendency to orientate its leaves skyward. In a testament to the reverence for water, the Hawaiians saw this variety as healing because its cupped leaves would not allow water to fall to the ground. Another variety is a distinct green color and has been prized as a clothing dye. Most taro varieties were pounded into a paste, *poi.* Many dryland taro varieties that were unsuitable for being

[18] The islands are small but the terrain is incredibly diverse. The prominent Hawaiian volcanoes, Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa, each receive a not insignificant amount of snow each year.

pounded into *poi* are called “table taro” and are usually served steamed. The leaves of some varieties are excellent when served baked or steamed. Some varieties make good flour and others are used as offerings to the gods. But none, regardless of application or demand, were as sacred as red taro. Red was the color of the gods and, by extension, the *ali’i* (Kirch, 2012). It was forbidden for anybody less than the chiefly class to consume red taro. The Hawaiians called this sort of restriction *kapu.*

Kalo **and** ***kapu***

Kapu is a Hawaiian concept straddling the line delineating the spiritual and the tangible world. Hawaiians were well aware of their precarious ecological position and emplaced this set of cosmologically principled rules so as to safeguard their resources and environment (Kelly, 2004). Structured on spiritual tenets, and bolstered by social and environmental demands, *kapu* was a worldly way to connect the Hawaiians’ cosmological and environmental obligations. It was “a set of strict religious laws that dictated the behavior of everyone based upon gender, status, age” and was the law of the land that covered all aspects of Hawaiian life for centuries (Christy, 2014, p. 10). It was also, not coincidentally, oriented towards responsible management of land and water so as to best sustain taro cultivation. When *kapu* was abolished in 1819 by the Hawaiian monarchy in an attempt to accommodate the colonial powers in Hawaii, one of the curious side effects was the reduced constraints on who can eat and plant taro (Hollyer, de la Pena, Rohrbach, & LeBeck, 1990). While this allowed anybody to consume varieties that were once prohibited to their social strata, the change had a bigger impact on the self-realization of a specific demographic – Hawaiian women.

Due to the mandates of *kapu*, namely that women were occasionally considered unclean because of menstrual cycles, nearly all of the tasks related to food production and processing fell upon men (Handy et al, 1972).[19] This included preparing and maintaining the *lo'i*, planting and harvesting taro, and processing. It was also thought that women could steal men's' *mana*, or power (Christy, 2014). Therefore, many social activities, notably eating, were segregated by gender (Tengan, 2008). Until *kapu* was abolished, women had virtually no role in taro cultivation (Handy et al, 1972). Following 1819, women took on an increasingly more prominent role in the *lo'i.* This was most certainly a result of the easing of *kapu* but, I argue, that it was equally attributable to necessity. As we will see in Chapter 3, Hawaiian birth rates were declining during the 19th century and men were needed for the sandalwood trade. Women were needed to rectify the domestic labor shortage, though their additional contribution was unable to increase output or offset the famines (Kuykendall, 1965).

Following the easing of *kapu*, other food-oriented restrictions were broken such as the separation of men and women at meals and the prohibition of discussing business over the *poi* bowl.[20] In the last few decades, women have taken a large role in taro farming. I would argue that, given taro's status as a symbol of equality and resistance, the 1970s Hawaiian Renaissance saw any remaining vestiges of *kapu* on taro and gender committed

[19] Following the 1819 elimination of the *kapu* system, the gender roles formerly surrounding taro became antiquated and no longer strictly adhered to. Men and women shared responsibility in the taro field. I have even seen men take on the domestic responsibilities to free up women for work in the *lo'i*. It is my argument that, particularly following the 1970s Hawaiian Renaissance, further easement of gender roles was likely owed to taro's position as a resistance symbol in a time when equality was at the forefront of most movements.

[20] Though this remnant of the old ways does live on in a slightly modified sense. Now, it is considered inappropriate to argue over the *poi* bowl. Consuming *poi* is meant to be a family affair and not to be marred by ill feelings.

to history. These days, you are still likely to see the word *kapu* on homemade signs around Hawaii. These should be taken just as seriously as they ever were, though the context is quite different. Rather than referring to gender roles or social hierarchy, a *kapu* warning is to let you know that you are near a *heiau*, approaching private property, or to caution drivers to slow down as young children may be playing nearby. In any case, it is a subtle, but nonthreatening, notation that you are a long way from the tourist beaches and, while the area is not restricted to you, a bit of mindfulness and care is advised.

Gods in the garden

For Hawaiians, taro exists at a juxtaposition of the physical and spiritual worlds. When something becomes so important, so crucial, to the wellbeing and survival of a society, that thing will undoubtedly take on more complex roles. A certain reverence for the thing will develop; an emotional bond, borne of dependence, will form. Taro's revered status, as stated by Handy, "was not the cause but the result of the place of this distinguished plant in native life." (Handy et al, 1972, p. 75). Its practical importance, paired with its adaptability to the Hawaiian environment, made taro omnipresent. Born of this dependence was a deeper relationship between plant and human. Taro was a source of life, an appellation that transcends calories and nutrients and carries mystical implications. It is hardly surprising that taro took on such spiritual characteristics; anything so ubiquitous and fundamental to survival would be destined for a certain level of deification.

In this section, the relationship between taro and Hawaiian spirituality will be examined. It is requisite to note what this section is not. This is not intended to be an

exhaustive analysis of Hawaiian mythology. Nor could it be. The animistic polytheism that characterizes Hawaiian spirituality is not static and a comprehensive examination of it can, and does, fill volumes. Hawaiian spirituality does not follow conventions that are common to mainstream international religions. Though it does share the characteristic of being adapted to differing geographical locations as is seen with, say, the many Christian denominations, the Hawaiian pantheon and doctrine was relatively fluid. Anything in nature could be a god (Beckwith, 1970). Even further, multiple interpretations exist, some of which were made in the last 200 years. With this in mind, this section serves to focus solely on taro's place in Hawaiian theology, an element that was fixed and consistent. It is my intention that taro's mystical story in this section, compounded with its worldly one in the previous, will produce a holistic understanding of the Hawaiian affection for the plant. In effect, the reader will enter the following chapter with a comprehensive understanding, perhaps empathy, of the repercussions of the events surrounding taro's inaudible downfall.

To understand taro's significance in Hawaii, it is requisite to start at its origin. We must look long before the cultural and political struggles of the 20th century and before the arrival of Europeans and Americans, preceded by Captain James Cook in 1778. Taro's genesis does not even begin with the arrival of Polynesian voyagers in the Hawaiian archipelago. Taro's story, for the Hawaiians, precedes all mankind. Taro's creation story is as follows. Sky Father, known as Wākea, and Earth Mother, known as Papahānaumoku, were the "great-grandparents of the human race" (Hartwell, 1996, p. 3). They gave birth to a daughter, named Ho'ohōkūkalani, daughter of Papahānaumoku, the Earth. She was renowned for her beauty and Wākea became quite taken with her (Hartwell, 1996). Soon, Wākea and Ho'ohōkūkalani gave birth to a stillborn child. The deceased child was buried

at the east end of the longhouse (Beckwith, 1970). Soon after, a taro plant budded from the infant's grave. The deceased child, that is the plant, was named Hāloa-naka, meaning long trembling stalk. Later, Wākea and Ho'ohōkūkalani had another child, a surviving son. This child was given the name Hāloa, in honor of his older brother who would feed him as he grew into a man that would ultimately become the progenitor of all Hawaiians.

Handy states, "In Polynesian genealogical principle, precedence in birth determines for all time status and deference." (Handy et al, 1972, p. 74). Being the elder, particularly a sibling, carried a certain level of prestige (Taro Security and Purity Task Force, 2009). For the Hawaiians, as illustrated in the parable, taro was born of the gods and was intended to feed everybody. So precious was the plant that it could only have a divine origin. Additionally, taro is the older brother, illustrating the plant as sacred and superior to humans. Also emphasized is the concept of kinship and community critical to Hawaiian society. Interdependence was a part of life in Hawaii. Communities were built around the same affections organic to families. As seen in the story, the brothers share far more than just a name. Their survival is dependent upon one another. The older brother, taro, is tasked with feeding his younger brother, humanity. In return, the younger brother is obligated to honor the older brother by carefully tending to him, as a caretaker would for an older family member – or as a farmer would for the crops.

Hawaiian cosmology and the natural environment are inextricable. Consider the most valuable and beneficial part of the taro plant, the corm. Though most every part of the plant is consumed in some manner, the corm is the most versatile and nourishing. It is the root bulb living underground and serving as a storage vessel for the plant's nutrients. In relation to the taro creation story, the treasured corm is the body of the stillborn child.

This is evocative of a sort of reverse transubstantiation that is a part of Christian doctrines. Here, the unfortunate older sibling achieves immortality by sustaining the mortal younger sibling. The deceased body of Hāloa-naka is the assurance of life for Hāloa, who is burdened with humankind's eternal struggle for sourcing food. This act of benevolence ensures mankind's survivability and forges a bond of necessity. For Hawaiians, eating taro is to connect with their ancestors and cultural history (Miller, 2017).

Hawaiian language professor Noenoe Silva writes that the story of Hāloa "is often invoked to symbolize the *Kanaka* [humans, specifically ethnic Hawaiians] belief in a familial relationship to the land and opposition to ownership over the land." (Silva, 2006, pp. 101-2). A Maui taro farmer describes the spirituality central to the *mahi'ai kalo* (native taro farmer) experience:

> It is a way of living day to day and processing the ability to recognize the spirit of God alive in your life. You bow down to it constantly as Muslims do in prayer. You utter invocations of hope and petitions for abundant growth as a Hindu prays his prayer beads. When disease and famine come, you seek the fault within yourself as the caretaker or recognize the dire condition of our society reflected through this condition in the *kalo* as a *kanaka kuu kahi o Hawaii*, and you beat your chest to *mea culpa, mea culpa e domino mea culpa* [just] as a true catholic [does]. (Taro Security and Purity Task Force, 2009).

These quotes demonstrate the deeply spiritual sentiments attached to taro farming and the environment. The idea being that, when working the land, one is in the presence of the

gods. For the Hawaiians, this is not a figurative notion. There was a god for most everything, every place, and every phenomena.

Hawaiian historian George Kanehele states that when praying, in an attempt to not offend or omit any of the countless gods, it would not be uncommon to hear the chant, "Invoke we now, the 40,000 gods, or 400,000 gods or 4,000 gods…" (Kanahele, 1986, p. 70). Even further, there were sometimes multiple gods emblematic of a particular local resource or event. The local attitude would be that those gods are in conflict with each other and the prevailing deity would be dependent upon who you asked and where you were. For instance, two groups may have differing ideas of which god represents a local tree valued as a building material. One group may throw their support behind a god that also represents, say, a particular bird they value for their feathers. The other group would do the same for a resource that they, too, value. This social phenomena being spread across multiple communities resulted in a fragmented Hawaiian spiritual system that was largely adapted to the local geography. This also was the reason for the many cults that appeared across Hawaii, including sects devoted to sharks and ancestor worship. The emphasis on a particular local resource dictated many of the local professions, resulting in a local affinity for a certain deity and the rise of a cult devoted to it. An example being the prominent cults surrounding the feather working and bird snaring god, Kūhuluhulumana, in places where a particularly valuable bird was endemic (Kanahele, 1986). Hawaii's physical geography is surprisingly diverse and no single deity could account for the entire archipelago. Each locality modified its spiritual beliefs to align with the local geography, just as they did with agricultural practices.

There are two notable exceptions to the decentralized nature of the Hawaii cosmology. The first is that the Hawaiian spiritual system has a greater focus on plants than animals (Kanahele, 1986). Hawaiians were gardeners, not hunters, and this was expressed in their belief system. The Hawaiians were also remarkably less dependent upon the ocean than people in other parts of the Pacific (Clark, 1986). Even warfare was less emphasized in Hawaii than with their Maori and Samoan cousins, where much prestige and value was entrenched in being a successful warrior (Handy, 1972; Kanahele, 1986). Of course, warfare did exist amongst the Hawaiians; however, it was an intrigue of the elite *ali'i* (Abbott, 1992). The Hawaiian was a gardener and warfare is counterproductive, even harmful, to a successful harvest. The second exception is that, amongst the countless gods, four stood out among the rest. This quintet of deities, likely a carryover from ancient Polynesian belief systems, were unquestionably the most important gods and were manifested in the most sacred and valued elements of society and the environment.

As we enter the Hawaiian pantheon, we need not step out of the muddy *lo'i*, for they are one in the same. For the Hawaiians, as seen in Figure 2.11, there was not a barrier between the physical and spiritual worlds (Beckwith, 1970). The gods manifested themselves everywhere that humans were. Even the Hawaiian concept of "heaven" or "paradise", where the gods lived, were the tangible places that could be seen, even interacted with (Beckwith, 1970).[21] These gods, headed by a quartet of the most revered,

[21] It is thought that Hawaiian references to a "heavenly" place where the gods resided was generally a reference to a visible neighboring island, likely the outlying uninhabited atolls northwest of the inhabited islands (Beckwith, 1970). It must be noted that, before the 19th century, the Hawaiian Islands were not confederated and each individual island was the largest geographic division known to Hawaiians. At this time, to see a neighboring island was to see a "foreign place". Even today, knowing full well that the islands are all part of a whole, to see Maui from Hawaii is an incredible sight.

were intimately connected to all people as the plants and animals and seas. The four main gods were Kāne, Lono, Kū, and Kanaloa, and each manifested themselves in a *kinolau,* or bodily form. Kāne was the great life-giver whose *kinolau* included bamboo and sugarcane. Lono was the god of peace, fertility, and planting whose *kinolau* included pigs and rainclouds. Kū was the god of building and war whose *kinolau* included trees and coconuts. Kū was also the designated protector of plants and evocations from *maka'āinana* to the gods to take a plant or tree were all directed to Kū (Abbott, 1992). Even the god of war was never far from the farm. Kanaloa was the marine god whose *kinolau* included large fish and whales. Kanaloa was, however, the god with the most unclear responsibilities and his symbolism varies (Kanahele, 1986).[22]

[22] In many accounts of the Hawaiian gods, Kanaloa is simply left out, reducing the hall of the most powerful gods to a triplet. Such is the fluidity of the Hawaiian spiritual realm.

Figure 2.11. Sign in Waipi'o Valley, Island of Hawaii, emphasizing the connection between spirituality and the environment. Note the taro leaves on the right edge of the sign.

Of these four, Kāne was first among equals and came to represent, almost in tandem with Lono, that which Hawaiians valued most. For example, Kāne was the source of all water and Lono, in the *kinolau* of a raincloud, was the deliverer (Abbott, 1992). Kāne also specifically represents taro – his bodily form is the taro plant. Thus, when somebody consumes taro, they are consuming the body of Kāne, the most important of Hawaiian deities. Similar to bread and the Christian Eucharist or dates and the Islamic *iftar*, taro stands as a symbolic "everyman's food" at the intersection of the body and the soul.

The ancient Hawaiians held a festival called *Makahiki*. It coincided with the heavy winds and rains across the Pacific and, therefore, was a celebration to welcome the rains back to the islands. It also coincided with the reappearance of the Pleiades, a testament to the worldwide human propensity to use recurring celestial phenomena to make seasonal decisions and manage time. Though there is not a set date, *Makahiki* was generally celebrated at the end of October or November and lasted roughly four months. Though there were many celebrations, feasts, and athletic competitions to commemorate the occasion, *Makahiki* was also a time of rigid observance of *kapu.* War and killing was forbidden, as was sailing (Beckwith, 1970; Abbott, 1992).[23] Because *Makahiki* was a time to celebrate the rains, it was also a festival of Lono and was predicated on his return to the islands. And in January 1779, as far as the Hawaiians were concerned, that was exactly what happened. Arriving with the technology and splendor of a perceived god, James Cook was welcomed and revered by the Hawaiians as the bodily form of Lono. Cook was expected to bring the rains. As will be shown in the next chapter, he brought far more than that. History shows that the encounter between the Hawaiians and Cook did not turn out well, owing to Cook's ignorance of the local customs and the Hawaiians' growing frustration with the English (Kirch, 2012). Cook was killed on the west coast of the Island of Hawaii but his death was just the beginning of a new era in Hawaiian history. Hawaii was on the Western map and would never be the same again.

[23] It has been suggested that *Makahiki* contributed to Hawaiian agricultural success by providing an annual fallow for the plants and soil (Abbott, 1992). Hawaiian mastery of agriculture also included the knowledge of the hazards of overburdening the land; it is my argument that creating a festival season with the peripheral goal of rehabilitating the land would be advantageous in a time when formal adherence to botany would come secondary to cosmological indulgence.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have established taro's significance to the individual, the family, and the community. The growing requirements for the Hawaiians' most valuable source of food required the cooperation of community members and the local leadership, thus demonstrating taro as a community unifier. We have also examined how taro's ubiquity lent the plant to social constructs far from agricultural production, including law, resource rights, gender roles, and spirituality. For centuries, Hawaiians relied upon community kinship and sustainable agriculture. Their society was emboldened by cooperative resource rights and the ideals of environmental preservation. And every bit of this was unified by a single common theme – taro. Whether a person was a taro farmer or not, they were connected to the practice in a very real way. It pervaded the entire society. Everybody was connected to it. This was the state of Hawaiian society in relation to taro prior to European contact. The goal of this chapter was to establish and illustrate the importance of taro to the Hawaiians. It must be understood how much of their society was built upon this plant and its needs. Understanding taro's status in Hawaii is key to comprehending Hawaiian values, Hawaiian priorities, even the Hawaiian soul. With the concepts outlined in this chapter, it will become apparent why Western contact was so detrimental to the Hawaiians.

This chapter serves to outline how taro is emblematic of "Hawaiianness". It is not my intent to promote an Eden image of Hawaii. The Hawaiians were not without environmental problems of their own manufacture.[24] However, theirs was a highly

[24] Hawaiians, particularly the chiefs, were notoriously fond of lavish decorum and ostentatious adornments. With their resources limited, they turned to the one fairly consistent source of garish plumage – birds. It is thought that one chief's garb could be made up of the feathers of thousands of birds (Kirch, 2012).

sophisticated agrarian society that understood the importance of sustainability. Big brother taro was there to feed them provided they fulfilled their obligation as proper stewards of the environment. Even further, their low-fat and high-fiber diet was integral to their good health and longevity (Shintani et al, 1991). All Hawaiians were connected by taro. It would have been unimaginable to them to live in a world without it. But that is the very world we will explore in the following chapter. The focus shifts to the state of taro and Hawaiian society following the arrival of Europeans and Americans. This where key themes of resistance will begin to emerge. The introduction of Western agricultural practices, and the concepts of property ownership and debt and profit, were alien to the Hawaiians – and antithetical to taro production. Hawaiian society was systematically dismantled and replaced with a bizarre hybrid culture that was completely for sale.

When I say that taro farming is antithetical to the capitalist hegemony in Hawaii, I assert that it was indeed harmful. Taro was not very profitable by Western definitions, it occupied an immense amount of valuable land and water that could be allocated for cash crops, and was seen as little more than a native intrigue. Taro would be thoroughly displaced during the 19th century, replaced by a series of cash crops imposed upon the islands by political and business interests. The Hawaiians were not passive during this time, however. Though in the early years of colonial Hawaii there was a fair amount of cooperation between the Hawaiian chiefs and the capitalists, the realization was soon made by the islanders that Western and Hawaiian ways were not compatible. The allure of Western goods that had initially captivated the Hawaiian chiefs would soon wear off in the light of cultural loss. The Hawaiians fought back by reaching into their past. They would arm themselves, not with guns and political leverage and profits, but with their old ways.

It would take some time to gain widespread traction, nearly 170 years, but the Hawaiians would revitalize their traditional concepts of community and pastoral care for the environment to assert their culture and denounce the invading one. And there was no better way to do so than to promote farming a modest, unassuming plant that completely flies in the face of the dominating Western political, military, and economic control.

Chapter 3: Taro and post-contact Hawaii: Decline, renewal, resistance

Introduction

Taro's modern role as a symbol of Hawaiian resistance owes to its political and economic history. This includes the histories of the other plants connected to it in Hawaii, such as rice and sandalwood. Taro cultivation has long been a subtle statement of independence and self-sufficiency, strengthened by communal kinship. However, taro does not inherently possess these attributes; they were formed by centuries of political and social changes on the islands.

In this chapter, the political and economic forces that dictated Hawaii's transition from an independent chain of islands to US state will be examined, with special attention to local agriculture as the underlying catalyst of this chain of events. In addition, the Hawaiian movement to resist these influences will be also discussed, through the same lens. It should be noted that taro did not feature centrally in the events that will be outlined in this chapter. In fact, taro is discussed relatively seldom until the end of this chapter. Perhaps that helps to convey the shock caused by the drastic decline in taro cultivation in a place where it was once unimaginable to not see it. Taro was never pursued as a cash crop by colonial business interests, for reasons that will be detailed in the following sections. The priority went to extracting profitable cash crops. Taro cultivation was an endeavor left to the Hawaiians, far from the profit-driven gaze of the powers that would soon dominate

Hawaii politically and socially. Rather, in relation to the events that will be outlined here, taro was affected by the crops that surrounded and supplanted it.

For the American and European influences in Hawaii, taro was relegated as a curious, but negligible, product of the local culture. Taro was never intentionally displaced, only incidentally. There was not necessarily a cabal of interests determined to displace this one plant. There did not need to be. The profit-driven systems that came to dominate Hawaii were designed to preserve the Western hegemony and displace anyone, and anything, that was not in their favor. Taro's growth infrastructure proved to be convenient but that was the extent of its usefulness to foreign interests.

For all of their ignorance of, or apathy for, the local ways, the colonialists did fully embrace one aspect of Hawaii – the land and environment favorable for agricultural production. The 19th century would see a series of profitable commodities come from the islands, each one furthering the colonial plan to drive a wedge between the Hawaiians and control of Hawaii. With each passing decade, British and American business concerns would institute a series of political and legal reforms designed to bring the islands under Western control. As tends to be customary of imperial endeavors, this began with missionaries and culminated with a joint commercial-military-political initiative that would bring Hawaii into the United States.

Beginning in the early 19th century, taro would begin to be casually displaced but it was never far from sight for the Hawaiians. The land would change, governments and policies would come and go, but taro would remain as a Hawaiian symbol of resistance; a reminder that not all things can be defined by their monetary value. When Captain Cook

made landfall in 1778, the taro plant stood as a sentinel of the old ways, bending only slightly in the frenzied whirlwind of events that surrounded it.

Landfall

Upon European contact with Hawaii in 1778, taro was far and away the most prevalent crop on the islands and the core component of their diet (Pollock, 1992). It was the primary source of food for Hawaiians; not even the ever-present ocean provided more life sustaining resources than the taro plant. Across 6 of the 8 islands, roughly 31 square miles were dedicated to taro production prior to European contact (Cho, Yamakawa, & Hollyer, 2007). Beginning in the early 19th century, as the colonial powers began to realize the potential for profit in Hawaii, exponentially more land and resources were appropriated by Western agricultural initiatives. This sent taro into a steep decline. By the beginning of the 20th century, dedicated land for taro farming was down to an estimated 2 square miles (Cho et al, 2007). By 1941, that number fell to 1.4 square miles (Cho et al, 2007). In 2007, the plant that was once the most important food source in Hawaii, could be found on little more than half of a square mile (Cho et al, 2007). From the time of Western landfall and through the 20th century, the valuable water and land traditionally allocated for taro was used to produce a succession of highly profitable crops (Daws, 1968). These newer crops' cultivation methods were not entirely dissimilar to taro's; paired with the fact that the environment was also equally advantageous for growing these cash crops, taro seemed destined to fall by the wayside. It simply was not profitable and only valuable to the native population – attributes hardly within the consideration of imperial ambition.

As is characteristic to most imperial pursuits, missionaries and spiritual leaders were among the tip of the spear in the early years of the colonial occupation of Hawaii.

Accompanying them were the sustainability structures, colonists, increased nautical traffic, and diseases. Not possessing the generations of immunity that the Europeans carried, measles, tuberculosis, and syphilis were devastating to the Hawaiians, (Van Dyke, 2008). The native population was physically demoralized. With the religious impositions from the Christian missionaries, they were equally spiritually demoralized. With the dwindling population came less devotion to the traditional ways. The stage was set for the first cleave in the native tapestry. In 1819, as a response to the changes brought by missionaries and the pressures on the population, Kamehameha II abolished the stricter tenets of the *kapu* system that for so long had directed Hawaiian society. For better or worse, these were the guidelines by which Hawaiian society functioned. Though some of the doctrines of *kapu* can be argued as regressive or obstructive, the fact remains that *kapu* was what bound Hawaiian society. It was the critical foundation of Hawaiian concepts of law, distribution, and hierarchy. The elimination of these taboos opened the door for changes in virtually every facet of Hawaiian life. Eliminating *kapu*, in regards to taro, allowed for the mass consumption of taro varieties that would traditionally be allocated for royalty. Additionally, the commoner was allowed, and sometimes coerced, to pursue other occupations outside of taro farming (Evans, 2008).

In 1848, an event known as The Great *Mahele*, a vestige of the ending of the *kapu* system, would further displace Hawaiian culture in favor of invading powers. The Great *Mahele* was a system of land redistribution initiated by Kamehameha III and will be further explained in this chapter. In effect, Hawaiians lost claim to their lands and were introduced to the idea of private property (Evans, 2008). Native farming became nearly impossible on any sort of meaningful scale. As a result, taro became an individual and family endeavor;

a sort of backyard garden plant (Evans, 2008). A secondary effect was that the sense of community fundamental to taro farming was curbed. No longer would neighboring farmers require communal help, and courtesy, to assure a successful harvest. Instead, these communally-driven farms were replaced with the 19th century American icon of subjugation under crushing capitalism - the sprawling plantations that served as the beating hearts of agricultural production in the United States South. No sense of community or interdependence is required when profits can be leveraged against labor.

As it was an alien concept to them, Hawaiians did not have a proclivity for plantation life and largely avoided it. Beginning in the 1880s, to propagate the budding plantation culture, Asian immigrant labor to the islands increased. Thus, thousands of immigrants, primarily of Japanese descent, were brought to the islands to work on the sprawling rice farms. Plantation stores and local businesses catered to the tastes of this increasingly large part of the population. This had a significant influence on what was imported to, and grown in, Hawaii. The culinary culture of Hawaii became largely comprised of, as historian Rachel Laudan states, Asian staples and Anglo proteins (Laudan, 1996). This accounts for the social turn towards these foods. But what of the commercial interests that were invested in the same foods? What were they to gain and by what practical means?

As previously noted, taro farming dominated the agricultural landscape in Hawaii prior to European contact. Taro farms, *lo'i*, were everywhere, many of them hundreds of years old. When European and American planters began to appropriate Hawaiian land, they found that the existing taro patches were remarkably similar to rice paddies. What's more is that the infrastructure was long ago emplaced by the Hawaiians, including the irrigation

canals and retaining walls, in a remarkable feat of engineering. Rather than terraforming new land and planning new support structures, it was a simple process to remove the taro plants and replace them with rice. As the *haole* planters acquired more land, and the corresponding water rights, taro was displaced further and further. It was simply not needed. Europeans and Americans did not have a taste for taro; the preferred carbohydrate of the Westerners being potatoes (Clark, 1986). What was more, taro was not very profitable; it catered to a niche market. Taro was bulky, labor intensive, and difficult to transport. Due to its tendency to rot quickly after harvesting, building up a surplus of taro for export was impossible. The transition to rice was an easy, and profitable, decision for the powers that would set Hawaii on a path to annexation by the United States. However, rice was not immediately recognized as the cash crop that it would become. The *haole* planters had to first realize Hawaii's potential in the soil. That began with an obscure tree that carried a high price in Chinese markets.

Sandalwood: Commercial agriculture comes to Hawaii

Hawaii's history following European contact, and up to the 1980s, is marked by a succession of boom and bust crops. The first industry to take hold was the lucrative sandalwood trade in the early part of the 19th century, lasting until 1829 (Kuykendall, 1965). The story of sandalwood is a fascinating chapter of Hawaiian history and could fill volumes concerning Hawaiian sociology and economics. The sandalwood market represented a watershed for Hawaiians: the profiteers came to the realization that the economic benefits of Hawaii lie in its soil. Additionally, the sandalwood trade would see the first time that the Hawaiians themselves would be centrally involved in the colonial profit machine.

Following the crash of the sandalwood industry, two questions remained – were the Hawaiians better off for having participated and was it at their own directive? The answer to the former is a resounding no; the latter is not so clear.

The export of Hawaiian sandalwood reached back to the last few years of the 18th century. Wanting to emulate the success the British had in China, the Americans were eager to break into the market. The trouble was that the Americans had little to offer the Celestial Empire, other than furs and gold. However, through the fur trading connections in Hawaii, American businessmen realized that sandalwood brought a decent price in China. It catered to a niche market in China and was often a peripheral good on-board the fur traders' ships (Morgan, 1948). Sandalwood was valued in China for ritual and artistic purposes, namely incense and ornate furniture. It became Hawaii's leading export following the decline of the Pacific fur trade after 1810. This was a critical event because it signaled Hawaii's shift in trans-Pacific business from a logistical support role to a direct manufacturer and supplier of trade goods (Kuykendall, 1965). The fur ships destined for China from the American Pacific Northwest were using Hawaii as a rest and refit point; sandalwood, however, was grown, processed, and exported from Hawaii. Additionally, the Hawaiian ruling elite experienced for the first time the benefits of capitalism and Western luxury goods. Profit shares and inducements from American merchants to the Hawaiian elite were intended to secure the sandalwood political economy.

The mechanics of the sandalwood trade are an illustration of the unregulated business practices that would come to dominate Hawaii. There were numerous American trading firms in Hawaii exporting sandalwood to China, all of which were competing with one another (Kuykendall, 1965). There were also numerous Hawaiian chiefs, responsible

for ensuring and controlling production, also all competing with one another. The demand for increased production, the settlement of debts, and the desire for trade goods each served to intensify one another (Sahlins, Barrère, & Kirch, 1992). The Hawaiians produced sandalwood in accordance with the agricultural production systems with which they were already familiar. The only real change was the addition of the concept of profit – a concept that would eventually lead to the crash of the market. In exchange for lavish goods, the local chiefs would guarantee the merchants a certain yield from the land they presided over (Kuykendall, 1965). Using their local population as labor, thousands of Hawaiian commoners were diverted to the sandalwood effort. These laborers saw little, if any, profit from the sandalwood they gathered; in fact, the system was detrimental to the average Hawaiian as long harvesting forays into the mountains took them away from their other social and familial responsibilities (Rohrer, 2010; Silva, 2006).[1] However, the notion of short term prosperity left an indelible effect on the Hawaiian psyche, creating a breeding ground for colonial influence.

During the period of intensive sandalwood cultivation and whaling, taro farming was in a steep decline. The native Hawaiian population, the principle producers and consumers of taro, was declining with estimates suggesting that the native population was less than 75% of that during the arrival of Captain Cook (Mills, 2002). The low birth rates and diseases characteristic of imperial influence were taking their toll on the native population (Clark, 1986). Furthermore, what Hawaiian labor was available was diverted from taro to sandalwood (Rohrer, 2010). The fundamental food source was not being

[1] Though it should be noted that the working class was not deprived of access to the influx of trade goods.

attended to, resulting in local food shortages and subsequent soaring prices (Clark, 1986; Kuykendall, 1965). Additionally, working in the sandalwood industry did not excuse the average Hawaiian from his civic responsibility of taro tribute to the local chief. Many Hawaiian farmers, to rectify the shortage, were introduced to the concept of debt (Silva, 2006).

The death knell for the trade was simply in the overextension of credit and the underproduction of sandalwood. The merchants extended to the chiefs far more payment, largely in the form of luxuries and goods, than was remunerated with product. The variance was passed on to lower chiefs, and eventually laborers, by way of higher yield demands. Eventually, the Hawaiian labor pool was harvesting sandalwood to compensate for long past-due debts accumulated by the chiefly class. “The common people were losing interest in paying off [the debt] even faster than they were losing the manpower to do so”, writes Kirch and Sahlins (Sahlins et al, 1992, p. 81). The Chinese market found new sources for sandalwood, the Hawaiian environment could not sustain the intensive cultivation, and the local population was drowning in debt (Kuykendall, 1965). By 1830, the sandalwood trade was completely gone. In just a few decades, the Hawaiians were dealt their first hard lesson in the fragility of markets, the allure of trade goods, and capitalism’s toll on their environment. This would not be the last.

Whaling: The realization of Hawaii’s profitability

Paralleling the sandalwood trade, and eventually surpassing it, was the whaling industry. Whaling emerged in Hawaii in the 1820s and was a steady market for nearly 50

years. Rather than playing a first-hand role in whaling, Hawaii's relevance to the industry was as a resupply point for the ships actively pursuing whales. This was a role no different than Hawaii played for the fur merchant ships previously discussed. Hawaii would find a boon in providing food and materials for the ships, as well as alcohol and women for the sailors, two industries for which the islands were developing a reputation. To meet the demand for locally produced goods that were required for the whaling ships, namely food, there was a renewed enthusiasm for local agriculture. Though this was a revitalization of what the Hawaiians did best, it was another step closer to the islands losing their independence.

During the height of the whaling industry in Hawaii, Hawaii would experience its second significant cultural shock since the landing of Captain Cook. This event, known as The Great *Mahele*, set in motion the events that would lead to the collapse of the Hawaiian Kingdom. The sweeping cultural changes stemming from the elimination of *kapu* set the stage for further reforms to the Hawaiian ways. Prior to the 1840s, the Hawaiian chiefs held and controlled all of the land across Hawaii. Commoners that lived on the land owed the ruling chief their labor and a cut of what was produced, generally taro. This applied to the *haoles* as well. Gavan Daws writes, "Even white men who wanted to do business at the islands held property only at the pleasure of the chiefs" (Daws, 1968, p. 125). Of course, such an arrangement would limit the ability for colonialists to maximize profit. The Hawaiians would be introduced to the concept of private property, courtesy of the industrialists. The chiefs knew that change had reached the islands, brought by missionaries and businessmen and foreign governments, and reluctantly acquiesced (Daws, 1968). With *kapu* no longer the predominant law of the land, the Hawaiian chiefs no longer held a divine

claim as stewards of the land on behalf of the gods. It was simply an earthly legal matter at this point, well within the capabilities of the industrialists. In its place came a spectacularly complicated land division restructuring. The mechanics of the Great *Mahele* are not within the scope of this paper so, in the interest of simplicity, I will provide a cursory framework of how it worked and its impacts on the Hawaiians. The king would first relinquish his lands, save for a few holdings that would become crown lands (Daws, 1968). Next, the *ali'i* identified lands that they wanted to retain and would finally sell off pieces of land to commoners (Van Dyke, 2008). However, all land had to be surveyed before the claim could be made. This could, arguably, be where the reforms favored the *haoles.* The Europeans and Americans knew full well how the system worked and how to establish a claim, and they did so within days of legislation (Daws, 1968). The Hawaiians, however, were behind the learning curve.

Never, in their long history, had the idea of private property and land transfer ever been an issue for the Hawaiians. The land fundamentally could not belong to a person. It belonged to the gods. Men were merely the caretakers, with the chiefs serving as intermediaries. Thus, the Hawaiians were slow to establish their claims, if even at all. Even more, the surveyors, however intentioned, were producing faulty surveys using multiple rudimentary measurements (Daws, 1968). Hawaiian lands were for sale and the *haole*, backed by excess capital and political power, was at an advantage. The tragedy fell upon the common Hawaiian. Land, and everything on it, became a commodity. Land was divided into parcels, the owner doing with it as he pleased. There was no need for the communal bonds that had so long been at the heart of Hawaiian concepts of land management. The Native Hawaiian could now be a property owner. They were no longer obligated to grow

taro. They could grow what they liked or simply sell the land. In the short term, this sort of freedom seems preferable. It empowers and bestows a sense of self-realization on a people that had never before been given these kinds of options. However, the catch was that there was a veritable army of businessmen eager to take advantage. By the end of the 19th century, the *haole* would own four acres of Hawaii for every one owned by a Hawaiian (Daws, 1968).

Whaling went into decline in the early 1860s largely due to the advent of kerosene, negating the need for whale oil, as well as the appropriation of ships for service in the US Civil War (Haraguchi, 1987). Hawaii's economy would continue on the agricultural route it was set upon. However, it would do so with the newly enacted regulations of the Great *Mahele* - policies that Hawaiians rarely benefitted from, if at all.

Rice: Pacific plantations and imported labor

Though the whaling and sandalwood markets crashed, the lesson was well learned – that Hawaii's economic value was in the soil. The environment was perfectly suited for high-yield cash crops. All that was needed was the land, the water, and the labor. These three requirements would be quickly rectified.

In the mid-1860s, the potential for Hawaiian rice was realized. It grew quickly and its proclivity for high yield production all but insured its profitability. What is more is that the infrastructure for a rice crop was already in place. Consider the mechanics of a rice field – lots of space on arable land, a surplus of moving water, and embankments for the laborers to move amongst the plants. Profit-driven eyes were drawn to these long-

established plots – the taro fields. Land formerly allocated for taro was purchased and traded. The taro was uprooted and replaced by rice (Haraguchi, 1987). In 1862, the dawn of the rice industry, Hawaii exported a net of 923,184 pounds of processed and unprocessed rice to California (Haraguchi, 1987). This number would peak nearly 35 years later at over 13 million pounds (Haraguchi, 1987). By 1907, rice occupied over 10,000 acres in Hawaii (Cho et al, 2007). What caused such a boom that was never before realized in Hawaiian agriculture? The answer is in two parts and underlies the budding socio-cultural milieu of Hawaii.

Hawaii provided a nearly perfect prototype for the cultivation of rice. The infrastructure was in place, for the most part, and the environment was conducive to a quick harvest. What was a bit trickier was the problem of labor. Rice and taro's similarities do not end with the methods of their cultivation; they are equally laborious to sow, maintain, and reap. The Hawaiians had long ago rectified this problem through a structured system of communal collaboration. Rice did not enjoy this kind of cooperation for the greater good. The rice "farms" were instead sprawling plantations, a system widely employed on the US mainland. Hawaiians were culturally averse to plantation life, not understanding the concepts of densely populated living spaces and industrial farming. Additionally, the islanders were not blind to the American Civil War raging at the time, and its connections to plantation economics. Hawaiians simply chose to avoid the plantations.

The problem of labor loomed over the American rice planters. Capitalist problems beg capitalist solutions – cheap labor was imported from Asia, primarily China and Japan. The workers were experienced with rice and worked cheap, to the benefit of the plantation owners. Most of the Asian workers were in Hawaii on short-term labor contracts, averaging

5-7 years. When those contracts were completed, many chose to return their home country while some remained in Hawaii living as second-class citizens (Osorio, 2002). The islands were essentially being repopulated with a foreign labor force. The importation of contract labor, and the plantation system itself, found steady ground with the rice industry and grew exponentially when sugar became the economic mainstay of Hawaii.

Rice's success was also owed to political maneuverings. The 1875 Reciprocity Treaty was a godsend to the American business interests, and damning to the Hawaiians. Unknown to the Hawaiians at the time, this document would directly lead to the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy. The principle behind the document was to bolster trade between Hawaii and the United States. Hawaii, being an independent nation unto itself, was subject to the laws and taxes applicable to any other international trade partner. While this a fair and lawful arrangement, it cuts into the profits of the commercial interests. Given the tenuous state of the Hawaiian monarchy and its unusual relationship with the US government, an agreement was made. Certain items, namely rice and eventually sugar, would not be subject to tariffs. Additionally, American goods imported into Hawaii would also not be subject to duties. In effect, this guaranteed markets and crushed international competition. The liberalization of the import-export laws that had long governed trade between the two nations opened up massive investments into Hawaiian agriculture. Hawaii's lands were up for grabs. Hawaiian legislator Joseph Nāwahī said that the treaty would be "the first step of annexation later on, and the Kingdom, its flag, its independence, and its people will become naught" (qtd. in Van Dyke, 2008, p. 119). On the part of the investors and merchants, business was booming and profits soaring. On the part of the Hawaiians, once communal land fell outside of their reach.

The intended "reciprocity" lies in the arrangement that the Hawaiian products would be guaranteed a market in the United States, ostensibly funneling economic prosperity into the islands. But what was in it for the United States, other than the securing of free trade and attracting new investors? The US government had one request, made nearly 12 years later during an amendment hearing – that the Hawaiian monarchy grant the United States government free use of a swampy piece of coastline near Honolulu called Pu'uloa. History will remember this place as Pearl Harbor.

Sugar: The last days of the Kingdom of Hawaii

Rice was not to stand alone as Hawaii's cash crop. With rice as the forerunner, sugar would emerge as the dominating product coming from Hawaii. Sugar would benefit from the foundation laid by the aggressive rice market and go on to define the Hawaiian political and economic situation. Even further, under the terms of the 1875 Reciprocity Treaty, the sugar industry in Hawaii would challenge the previously unrivalled sugar plantations in the American South.

Hawaiian sugarcane processing had its origins in the early years of the 19th century and was a relatively small industry. Though it was progressively becoming more profitable, it was ancillary to the dominating sandalwood and whaling markets. Much like rice, sugar found stable footing with the Great *Mahele* in 1848. From there, sugar ebbed and flowed with the political conditions in Hawaii and the US mainland until the 1860s. Where the land reforms of the *Mahele* boosted sugar, California's admission to the United States curtailed its profitability. California was environmentally suitable for growing sugarcane

and possessed a fraction of the logistical challenges inherent to Hawaiian industry. However, broader events in the United States primed Hawaiian sugar to dominate the industry. The US sugar production powerhouse in the southern states was stifled by the American Civil War, leaving investors to turn to Hawaii (Mintz, 1985). This event, bolstered by the free-trade terms of the 1875 Reciprocity Treaty, cemented sugar as Hawaii's most profitable crop well into the 1980s. In addition to transferring control of the physical environment to Western interests, sugar would also be instrumental in the toppling of the Hawaiian monarchy. Where rice piqued US commercial interests, sugar would be the means by which they would politically and economically dominate the islands.

With the question of plantation labor largely resolved by the rice industry, sugar carried it a step further. In addition to the Chinese and Japanese laborers, Portuguese workers began coming to Hawaii in the 1870s to work on the sugar plantations. Long experienced in the production of sugar, and the slave system that powered it, through their Caribbean and South American holdings, the Portuguese added yet another foreign influence that would leave a lasting impression on Hawaii. The multicultural climate of the plantations introduced new culinary traditions and the creole language of Hawaiian Pidgin, shown in Figure 3.1.[2]

[2] The plantations laborers were from very diverse backgrounds, having little in common not least of which was a language. Hawaiian Pidgin originated amongst the workers as a way to communicate amongst one another, the people that they would have seen every day. It incorporates English, Hawaiian, Portuguese, Chinese, and Japanese language elements (Laudan, 1996). It is commonly spoken around the islands and, in the last few decades, has been used extensively in mass media. The Hawaiian word for the language, *ʻōlelo paʻi ʻai*, translates as "taro-pounding language."

Figure 3.1. An example of Hawaiian Pidgin in Waipi'o Valley, Island of Hawaii. The top sign, in Hawaiian Pidgin, translates as "Don't make any trouble".[3] The middle sign, in Hawaiian Pidgin, translates as "Care for the land". The bottom sign is much less ambiguous and cautions visitors not to run over the island's semi-famous free-range chickens.

As is the case with many Hawaiian agricultural products, the sugarcane plants were resource-hungry. Just the same as taro, sandalwood, and rice, sugarcane needs ample space and water. Where sugarcane diverged was the profitability index. Commercial motivation

[3] "No make any kine" is a broad phrase that carries many contexts and is not entirely dissimilar from *kapu* signs found around Hawaii. One Hawaiian explains "[This phrase] can include trespassing on private property or on sacred burial grounds, speeding on the road, littering, taking something from an area, planting something that doesn't belong in the area, flying drones, spraying chemicals, stealing, not respecting the locals, etc. All of that is included in 'any kine'. Such an awesome language!"

to secure their product is directly proportional to how profitable the product is. The comparatively less profitable sandalwood and rice were enough to encourage sweeping land reforms and political interference. Sugarcane's profitability merited a much more extreme endeavor to assure its future and was enough to topple a nation.

The industries that govern Hawaii are like the tides, coming in with great fanfare, leaving their lasting impression, and disappearing with little more than a whisper, making way for the next. Sugarcane, along with rice, declined in the 1920s. By 2016, Hawaiian sugarcane production would be all but gone. A host of factors were responsible for its demise. Global shipping was becoming cheaper and more efficient. As such, other production centers were created at much lower overhead costs, notably the US mainland and India. Hawaiian agriculture was highly profitable and transformed the islands, physically and culturally. However, planting was no match for the next, and current, industry to dominate Hawaii. Air travel entering the mainstream would bring the once most isolated place on earth within a few hours reach. The old agricultural manors would fall into disuse, giving way to a new form of plantation – the resort (Williams & Gonzalez, 2017). Tourism would shatter the old colonial notion that Hawaii's value was in what could be extracted from the soil; rather, the focus was shifted to what could be built upon that soil.

Fall of a nation

The penultimate event in the collapse of the Hawaiian nation was the ratification of the 1887 Constitution of the Hawaiian Kingdom, commonly referred to as the Bayonet

Constitution. The document came as a result of unscrupulous political maneuverings on the part of the local business elite. These businessmen were members of a clandestine organization called The Hawaiian League. The Hawaiian League was formed from a political group made up of religious and business leaders called The Committee of Safety, also known as The Committee of Thirteen. Comprised entirely of businessmen and legal experts, the group sought to undermine the Hawaiian monarchy and consolidate power for the United States business interests on the islands.

The Hawaiian League held a meeting on June 30, 1887, attended by such notable promoters of Hawaiian westernization as Sanford Dole, cousin of the Hawaiian pineapple magnate James Dole, and Peter Cushman Jones, the chair of Hawaii's largest sugarcane plantation (Osorio, 2002). The scene held all of the romanticism of an underground revolutionary movement - likeminded individuals gathered to passionately call for the overthrow of long-established power and the institution of radical new ideas. These men, none of whom were Native Hawaiian, all held influential postings in the commercial and political affairs of Hawaii. One of the more enthusiastic agitators, a political and media magnate named Lorrin Thurston, compiled the meeting's points into a single list of demands for King Kalākaua. This was an ambitious list, detailing such guidelines as the institution of a new constitution and the dismissal and re-staffing of the king's cabinet (Osorio, 2002; Van Dyke, 2008). Within the week, the king would have the list and a new constitution would be drafted by none other than the Hawaiian League appointees to the king's new cabinet, including Lorrin Thurston. On July 6, 1887 King Kalākaua signed the 1887 Constitution of the Hawaiian Kingdom. The provisions of the document essentially transferred all royal authority to the legislature, a malleable organization that was firmly

owned and staffed by the Hawaiian League (Van Dyke, 2008). It also stipulated that a certain income or amount of land holdings were required to hold public office or vote, as well as having Hawaiian, American, or European ancestry (Osorio, 2002).[4] With the signing of this new constitution, colloquially referred to as the Bayonet Constitution, the Hawaiian Kingdom was effectively gone. It would seem that with the local resources, government, and commercial supremacy well within their control, the industrialists of Hawaii would be content to preserve the situation and let the profits flow. However, there remained one last step to completely bring Hawaii under American control – overthrow and removal of the Hawaiian monarchy.

The Hawaiians did not take the Bayonet Constitution on the chin. The native population was growing hostile to the new order. Popular support for the monarchy was growing. Hawaiians, long understanding which way the wind blew, had been asserting their traditional ways for a few decades prior to these events as a nonviolent form of protest to *haole* encroachment. This first attempt at social resistance would become the precursor to the Hawaiian Renaissance. Following the Bayonet Constitution, Hawaiians rallied around their encumbered king to bolster popular support for his legitimacy. Capitalizing on this momentum, King Kalākaua attempted to introduce amendments to the constitution in 1890 that would restore some of his power. The hostile legislature had no trouble quashing these reforms. However, the political climate was clear. Though the US-backed Hawaiian legislature was firmly in charge, the situation was not sustainable. Eventually,

[4] A clause reminiscent of the legalities suppressing black, women, and working class voters on the US mainland.

something would give. Further action on the part of the American merchant class was required.

In 1891, King Kalākaua died while on a trip to California. He would be Hawaii's last king. His sister, Lili'uokalani, ascended the throne. She immediately continued the former king's work to institute reform and amend the constitution. Particularly, the new queen sought to restore voting rights to every citizen, strip away some of the regulations for holding public office, rescind American voting rights in local elections, and restore the monarchy's obligation to appoint local leadership to each island (Kinzer, 2007; Van Dyke, 2008). These moves were enormously popular with the native population and the queen received massive support from all of the islands (Silva, 2006). When her attempts were met with the same defeat as her brother's the previous year, a surge of revolt vibrated through the islands.

This sort of rebellion was potentially expensive for the American industrialists; the Hawaiian League could not allow their revolution to be met with counterrevolution. Lorrin Thurston, along with members of the Hawaiian League, assembled the Committee for Safety and immediately raised alarm about the potential for mass protest and chaos. The Committee, wanting to portray the queen as fomenting a populist insurrection, grossly overstated the degree to which the native population was revolting; so much so as to convince US Minister to Hawaii John Stevens to land a detachment of US Marines near the 'Iolani Palace (Kinzer, 2007). On January 17, 1893, the Committee of Safety declared the queen overthrown and took possession of the government (Kinzer, 2007). Queen Lili'uokalani, realizing the situation at hand, abdicated her throne and a provisional government was assembled, with Sanford Dole as the president of Hawaii. The US

government immediately recognized the new Hawaiian government and Dole as its president. Political semantics would change for a few years concerning Hawaii's official title: the provisional government managed the island's affairs until the 1894 establishment of the Republic of Hawaii with Dole as its governor. From 1898 to 1959, Hawaii would be known as the Territory of Hawaii, after which it became the State of Hawaii. Ultimately, what had occurred was that a group of businessmen, motivated by profit, bolstered by political authority, and protected by a foreign military, had deposed a head of state and instituted a new government. The United States of America was in the business of regime change to incorporate primary producers into its globally connected food systems.

Change in the context of food traditions

Culinary traditions are symbols of change (Laudan, 1996). Rachel Laudan writes "What each one of us eats is the result of centuries of change." (Laudan, 1996, p. 6). This notion certainly applies to Hawaii. An analytical understanding of Hawaii's foods highlights the colonial constructs and mono-cropping in which they originate (Hobart, 2016). With the arrival of Europeans, the food scene began to change – and with it, society and culture. The modern perception of food in Hawaii is as obfuscated as the tourist culture surrounding it. A superficial glance at Hawaiian foods tends to reveal a menu with varying combinations of sweet and savory, with fruits, seafood, and rice dominating the food scene. A closer look reveals "local" favorites such plate lunch, loco moco, malasadas, and shave ice.[5] Filling the spaces in between the locally owned and operated eateries are the more

[5] A Japanese import, it is colloquially known as 'shave ice' and the addition of the past tense -d suffix will immediately identify a person as a mainlander.

common American storefronts, some slightly adapted to accommodate Hawaiian tastes.[6] These foods are remarkably flavorful and always a welcome treat when visiting the islands, though they are a bit hard on the waistline. They are generally well-liked amongst the locals, even boasted about, and contribute much to Hawaii's projected identity. However, the term "Hawaiian food" is a bit of a misnomer. As is the case with most culinary traditions, Hawaiian food is the product of multiple cultures that met in a single place and gave rise to a new one. It should be noted that the intention here is not to promote purist views of food cultures, nor is it to disparage any particular food tradition. Rather, the aim of this is to illustrate the cultural diffusion in Hawaii that influences such fundamental entities as food.

According to Laudan, Hawaiian food is comprised of four distinct traditions: pre-contact Hawaiian, European colonists, Asian plantation workers, and what is known as East-West Pacific food, or colloquially as "local food" (Laudan, 1996). The pre-contact Hawaiian diet was made up of the transplanted Polynesian plants and animals, such as breadfruit, pigs, and coconut; this was paired with the pre-existing edible species in Hawaii, particularly birds and sea life. The Europeans and Americans introduced stock animals and Western fruits and vegetables. Asian plantation workers brought their own styles of cooking and ingredients, with a particular emphasis on rice-based dishes. Finally, a food tradition that is a conglomeration of the others, is what Hawaiians refer to as "local food". These are the heavy, relatively inexpensive, and widely pervasive meals that delineate what is commonly regarded as Hawaiian food. One can be in a major urban area or miles into

[6] McDonald's offers rice, SPAM, and taro pies, all cleverly incorporated into their standard menu offerings.

the countryside and there is almost certain to be found a homemade sign advertising "plate lunch". A quick glance at the ingredients reveals centuries of food traditions come together on a Styrofoam plate, typically for less than $10USD. A base of rice, topped with a protein, generally pulled pork or beef, smothered with gravy, alongside a scoop of macaroni salad. This is generally accompanied by a plastic container of *poi*. For something sweet, a popular choice is a malasada stuffed with your choice of fruit filling. On one plate, on an isolated Pacific island, are foods with origins in Hawaii, China, Great Britain, Portugal, and the United States. The implication of these various food traditions amassing themselves on the islands was that Hawaii was no longer strictly "Hawaiian"; it was a land of contrast every bit as diverse as a European or American metropolitan area.[7]

Throughout the changes, taro remained in Hawaii. However, it was in a degraded state. Taro's displacement wasn't intentional, just incidental. It fell victim to circumstances. Nevertheless, taro's state in the first decades of the 20th century does carry some underlying connotation. The objective of the colonialists wasn't an undeclared war on taro as a plant that could not be commodified – it was a deliberate supplanting of Hawaiian culture as a base for indigenous political activity. For the Hawaiians, taro represents independence and self-sustainability; a kinship between people, community, and the environment. Taro was pushed aside in favor of crops that impose dependence and control. Land and water, once communal, were subject to foreign laws and regulations. In the old ways, everybody participated and everybody gained. With the plantation system, a hierarchal system

[7] By no means is this meant to cast aspersions on changes in food traditions. "Purity" in recipes and eating habits does not exist. The intention here is to highlight how quickly Hawaii was changing, by what means, and to what end. Other than breathing, food is the one thing all humans share and it provides an excellent litmus test by which to interpret social, political, and economic change.

enabling high levels of control over workers was levied on a culture unable to understand it and incapable of sustaining it. Perhaps this explains the boom-and-bust phenomena characteristic of all of the industries that briefly dominated the islands. If so, one wonders what the eventual fate of the booming tourism industry will be.

Hawaii remained a US territory until 1959, at which time it was brought into the union as the 50th state. Trade agreements, deceitful treaties, and strategically placed politicians were no longer necessary. Hawaii was a bona fide US state – what is Hawaiian is American and vice versa. Air travel, once reserved for the military and the rich, was becoming more common. People were travelling more, and further. Hawaii was an ideal destination for Americans. Scenic, twelve months of stunning weather, and it offered people a safe glimpse into the once "uncivilized and mysterious" world of Oceania. Best of all, they spoke English, no entry permits were necessary, and everybody accepted the US dollar. The tourists came in droves. Hawaii was now in the vacation industry and, by extension, the real estate market. Tourists needed places to stay so the buildings went up. Americans were also finding that they could stay in Hawaii indefinitely so the neighborhoods expanded out. The Hawaiians could not afford the premium prices on these homes and were subsequently displaced, disrupting the people that lived Hawaiian style (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2014). In line with the other industries that had once dominated Hawaii, the Native Hawaiian culture was ill-suited for the emerging tourist industry. The native Hawaiians had, for centuries, maintained a worldview that emphasized the interdependence of land and people (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2009). As stated by Liza Keānuenueokalani Williams & Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez, "Tourism's alienation of one from the other [land and people] as commodity form operates as a mode of extraction that

is both invasive and unsustainable, and ultimately, incompatible with Indigenous sovereignty." (Williams & Gonzalez, 2017, p. 669).

On a chain of islands not renowned for elbow room, Hawaii had a deepening problem with living space. Developing businesses, tourism, and the influx of military personnel due to the war in Vietnam led to a population boom. The state's population grew from 632,772 in 1960 to 769,913 in 1970 (Cooper & Daws, 1985). Old problems revisited the islands in modern forms. At issue was the land. Once again, Hawaii's natural resources would feature centrally in a confrontation between the old ways and the new. And once again, those resources would be the catalyst of a remarkable chain of events. Only this time the Hawaiians were on the offensive.

Native resistance and the birth of the Hawaiian Renaissance

During its time as a US territory, and then as a state, the sweeping changes to Hawaiian culture never ceased. It was far beyond cultural erosion or dilution – it was simply being phased out. The Hawaiian language was forbidden, by law, in the shabby and underfunded public schools. The public school curriculum was oriented towards a revisionist history, "…overwritten by American historical narratives fabricated to make people believe that there was a legal merger between the Hawaiian Kingdom and the United States." (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2014, p. 5). The historical narrative was mangled and rewritten to portray Hawaii's acquiescence to the United States as a "legal merger", done in the best interests of the islands (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2014, p. 5). The US military made ample use of this strategic Pacific outpost, arguably the fundamental reason for Hawaii's

admission into the union. With eleven bases across four islands, and the island of Kahoolawe as a massive training target, Hawaii is one of the few states with representation from all five branches of the US military. The westernmost island of Ni'ihau, was purchased by a single family in 1864 and closed to visitors in 1915.[8] Hawaiians had little say in the ownership and use of public land. It was traded on the real estate markets and developed into high-end neighborhoods, leaving the former native residents pushed aside. And this is exactly where the situation reached a boiling point.

[8] The family still owns the island but has moderately loosened restrictions in order to generate income, notably through honey production and ranching. While no accommodations or tourist infrastructure exists, the current "industry" on Ni'ihau is hunting African megafauna.

Figure 3.2. Monument erected near Ka Lae, South Point, Island of Hawaii. This monument is at the site of the abandoned military installation Morse Field, also noted in Figure 3.5. The text to the right of the base reads "Kingdom of Hawaii is still here we never left". The carving on the left is of George Helm, a Native Hawaiian musician and local hero in the Hawaiian movement. The open-hands crowning the monument are representative of a gesture adopted by the demonstrators at Mauna Kea. The triangular shape of the hands are meant to represent the volcano.

For the Hawaiians, the symbolic birthplace of the Hawaiian Renaissance was in a quiet rural area 15 miles east of Honolulu called the Kalama Valley (Walker, 2005). It is a remarkable place on the windward side of the island. Quiet and well away from crowded Honolulu, yet close enough to offer urban conveniences. The moist air cools and create clouds around the towering mountains, Hawaii's signature postcard look. Fantastic beaches and some of the best fishing in the world are a short walk away. The Hawaiians realized

what a spectacular place it was. As did the real estate developers. In 1971, as had happened in so many other places around Hawaii, the land was earmarked for development and the bulldozers arrived to wipe away the homes and structures. The month-to-month leases held by the residents of the valley were sold by Bishop Estate to multiple developers with no relocation plan in place (Trask, 1987). Three dozen residents refused to leave, barricading themselves on the roof of one of the few remaining homes and ultimately leading to their arrest (Trask, 1987). While this demonstration originated as an anti-eviction and land use statement, Hawaiians quickly opened the message up to everything Hawaiian, as shown in Figure 3.2. Haunani-Kay Trask states that "the Hawaiian movement began as a battle for land rights but would evolve, by 1980, into a larger struggle for native Hawaiian autonomy… [The language of the movement] had changed from English to Hawaiian" (Trask, 1987, p. 126). The concept of love of the land, *aloha ʻāina*, was emphasized to police and policy makers, so as to highlight that the environment and Native Hawaiian sovereignty were inextricable. The Hawaiian Renaissance was on.

After decades on the side-lines, taro featured prominently in the Hawaiian Renaissance. The plant was intended to demonstrate the interconnected environmental and social issues at the core of the movement, as well as instill a sense of authenticity in the movement (Look, Trask-Batti, Agres, Mau, & Kaholokula, 2013). The Hawaiian Renaissance began with anti-eviction protests, with the recovery of native land being a dominant issue (Williams & Gonzalez, 2017). This would expand to encompass other native concerns connected to their own autonomy and environment. The protests were not limited to urban and residential areas. People living in rural agrarian areas voiced their concerns from their own perspectives. These were the Hawaiians that introduced the issues

of water rights to the Hawaiian Renaissance (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2014). As has been shown, taro requires an immense amount of water to grow and a certain infrastructure to deliver the water to the plants. By connecting the water and land to broader Hawaiian issues, taro farmers joined the Hawaiian Renaissance. The traditional methods of farming became "a deeply political act" (Miller, 2017).

The length of the Hawaiian Renaissance is debatable. Some contend that it lived its life during the 1970s and 80s and quietly faded away, allowing its progeny, the Hawaiian sovereignty movements, to carry the mantle forward. Others claim that the Renaissance is very much alive and finding new strength in such events as the Mauna Kea Thirty Meter Telescope demonstrations, shown in Figures 3.3 and 3.4.[9] Whichever the case may be, the movement made its mark and is abundantly apparent in Hawaii. In the last century and a half, the Hawaiian people saw their culture systematically dismantled, only to be revitalized and exploited as a tourist product marketed with Western tastes in mind. The Hawaiian Renaissance has been an emphasis of resistance for a relegated culture, a reclamation of culture and environment, often described as a "psychological renewal" (Kanahele, 1982).

[9] A teacher I spoke with told me that the Hawaiians involved with the Mauna Kea movement do not see themselves as 'protestors' but rather as *kia'i*, the Hawaiian word for protector or caretaker. I briefly visited the site at the base of Mauna Kea where the *kia'i* have formed a small, well-organized community, complete with a cafeteria, aid station, and school.

Figure 3.3. A few of the living quarters at the site of the Mauna Kea demonstrations (located on the north side of Saddle Road and just east of the Mauna Kea Access Road). Note the inverted Hawaiian state flags, a popular sign of solidarity within the Hawaiian movement and indicative of a nation in distress. Also note the sign on the lower right saying "We are Mauna Kea".

Figure 3.4. A few of the living quarters at the site of the Mauna Kea demonstrations (located on the north side of Saddle Road and just west of the Mauna Kea Access Road). Note the inverted Hawaiian state flag, a popular sign of solidarity within the Hawaiian movement and indicative of a nation in distress. The clouds are obscuring the volcano's peak.

Taro and cultural renewal

The amount of taro currently grown in Hawaii is nowhere near what it was prior to Cook's landfall. Once estimated to cover 20,000 acres, taro now covers less than 400 acres (Cho et al, 2007; Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2009). It is further dwarfed by the cash crops that surround it, such as coffee, corn, and macadamia nuts, of which around 80% are exported annually (Miller, 2017). However, taro is seeing a resurgence, in one form or another. Hawaiians consume about 6 million pounds of taro per year, roughly 75% of that produced in Hawaii and the remainder imported from Fiji and California (Vukovich, 2017). Consumption and demand is up but supply trails far behind (Hartwell, 1996; Evans, 2008).

The high-labor, low-profit nature of taro cultivation, combined with Hawaii's "change to a cash economy based on sugar, pineapple, and tourism", has made Hawaiian *kalo* "scarce and expensive" (Silva, 2006, p. 51). Taro's low market value makes it an undesirable crop in Hawaii where water accessibility is increasingly problematic and agricultural land is expensive (Miller, 2017). My last visit to Hawaii, I had to stop at three grocery stores before I was able to find a 12 ounce container of *poi*, and even then I had to ask an employee who had a case hidden away. He told me that it rarely stays on the shelf for more than a day, with the store often having to limit customers to a certain number of containers per visit. Taro, in no small part due to its place in the Hawaiian Movement, is a fashionable and highly demanded food, popular with Hawaiians, vegetarians, and savvy tourists seeking the local flavor.

Taro farming has also become a sort of social tool. Public and private schools are incorporating taro cultivation into their curriculum, utilizing a topic-based teaching method. With the farm as a classroom and the students as farmers, teachers deliver classes about

how and why taro is grown. Its history is explained and why it was so important to the Hawaiians. With this comes lessons about sustainability and environmental consciousness. Children, sometimes as young as five, are exposed to the interconnectedness of environmental systems and the necessity for renewable food sources that benefit both the land and the person. A farmer stated to me, highlighting the challenges and necessity of examining our current food production systems, "It is easy to talk about organic [food]. The reality of the *ʻāina* is different. It is a challenge for the world."

When I was undergoing teacher training, there was a heavy emphasis on including the students' prior knowledge in their learning so as to help them make meaningful connections and reinforce the lesson with practical application. Taro farmers utilize this same methodology to communicate the intersectionality of Hawaii's cultural and natural histories. University students benefit from these public education programs as well. I worked alongside a group of medical students that were gaining practical experience in what was described to me as "rural medicine"; they were learning about the daily lives and experiences of their future patients in rural areas. Additionally, some farms and nonprofit organizations focusing on taro farming offer scholarships and internships, brokered between farms and universities, which offer students practical experience in the *loʻi* in exchange for course credit in a range of disciplines from biology to engineering to sociology.

Many of these farms also host working parties, open to the public. Participation is common from eco-tourists and locals alike, promoting the sense of community required to grow taro. The participants sign a waiver and show up with nothing but their work

clothes.[10] They are taught the general methods of taro farming, as well as the related history and ecology. Often, the farm owners are referred to as 'uncle' or 'aunty'; similar familial terms are used amongst the participants, evoking the ancient kinship ties integral to a taro farm. And, in true Hawaiian fashion, the *lo'i* owner provides food and water for the people helping them maintain their farm. People tend to leave the experience exhausted, filthy, and dehydrated; but they also carry away with them a sense of pride in being a small part of an ancient culture and learning something about Hawaii that few outsiders are exposed to.[11] Farming taro is a meaningful experience that connects Hawaiians to their past and makes a statement delineating the genuine and imposed Hawaiian identity. A farmer remarked, "Working the plantation and working the *'āina* are two different things…we are not going back to the plantation." Another farmer quipped, "I could be giving surf lessons or fishing charters. I do this for a reason."

Many of these farms also reach beyond community education programs. They endeavor to reach some of the most marginalized people in society – at-risk juvenile offenders. As early as 1864, the virtues and methods integral to taro farming were used as a sort of rehabilitation for juveniles that were facing possible imprisonment (Tanimura, 1986). According to a 1986 audit of the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility, taro farms as rehabilitation facilities operated under the notion that "farming activities were intended as much to make this facility self-supporting as to provide therapy and training for the wards."

[10] Ideally, these are clothes that can be parted with as the *lo'i* tends to takes its toll on anything taken into it.

[11] Depending on the method being utilized, a taro *lo'i* can be anywhere between knee and chest deep with thick mud. The grower can spend several hours slogging through the mire, planting or harvesting or maintaining. Every footstep is hard earned. I would suggest that the difficulty of taro farming for newcomers is part of the lesson, underscoring the Hawaiian tradition of community participation being fundamental to a successful farm.

(Tanimura, 1986, p. 11). Today, this concept is expanded to multiple farms around O'ahu. More than just teaching agricultural skills, these programs hope to bolster connections between the youths and their communities. Rather than treat them as potential criminals, they are treated as valued members of a team that contribute to the common good. There are some requirements, generally that the youth has to want to be there, is recommended by a case worker, and is a first-time minor offender. While working on the farm, the youths are given the opportunity to open up to older community members, to reflect and tell stories (Kī'aha, 2016). A farmer involved in one of these programs stated, "We grow *kalo* to grow people." Illustrating taro's connections to other components of society and how the fundamentals of farming are ultimately a general education in Hawaiian culture, this farmer went on to say, "We won't all be taro farmers…but when you do other work, you're ready."

From my own experience working on taro farms, the work can often be tedious and repetitive. However, this is eclipsed by a commonality woven throughout those working in the *lo'i.* A farmer I worked with said, "You attach ideas beyond the plant…you see past the repetitive and mundane nature of the work…you see the energy going into the work for all this to grow. It is humbling." Like in any other manual labor project, the group tends to bond over stories and laughter. Friendships form and trust builds, often amongst people that had never met before; genuine connections are forged. For many of the kids referred to the farms in lieu of a corrections facility, this may be the first time they have ever had an older person listen to them. Their physical aggressions are dispersed into the muddy water and their inner demons into the air. Many of them are of native Hawaiian ancestry, as a disproportionate number of juvenile arrests in Hawaii tend to be (Kī'aha, 2016). Many from this demographic are taught to be proud of their ancestry and the value that it has.

Sadly, this may be a new concept for many of them. It is demonstrated here that taro is far more than a plant – it is a totem at the center of intercommunity connections. A farmer that leads programs for students and youths said to our group, "[Taro] is the foundation of Hawaiian culture and society…and if you walk away with nothing else, *nani ke kalo* (beautiful the taro)."

Museums around Hawaii are also serving as public amplifiers of the resurgence of Hawaiian identity. The Bishop Museum in Honolulu, standing as the Hawaiian state museum and world's largest collection of Pacific artefacts, prominently features elements of Native Hawaiian life, highlighting the inextricable connections between culture and environment. Art Historian Suzette Scotti writes of the museum, "Daily activities connected to the cultivation of the land are featured…through the display of objects related to taro cultivation, fishing, and traditional handicrafts…" (Scotti, 2015, p. 23).

Upon entering The Bishop Museum, or any of Hawaii's other museums, a visitor may notice that the exhibitions tend to be an amalgamation of natural and cultural history. Featured alongside the material culture artefacts are the natural resources utilized to construct them. Long panels spanning the entire gallery illustrate the Hawaiian lunar calendar. Birds and plants and sea life critical to the ancient Hawaiian society are the focal points of each level of the gallery. It is not until the third level, much like this thesis, that Hawaii's geopolitical history takes precedence over the indigenous environmental emphasis. The colonial history exhibitions are supplemented by displays of Hawaiian resistance. Scotti writes of the third floor of the Bishop Museum:

> The subsequent history of Hawai'i is documented up to the present day, highlighting the growth of tourism after World War II, statehood in 1959, the U.S. bombing of Kaho'olawe Island, the advent of the Hawaiian Renaissance in the 1970's, and the recent rise of the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement. The exhibit concludes on a positive note, honoring the achievements of three outstanding members of the Hawaiian community who perpetuated and celebrated their culture in the face of the U.S. occupation: Prince Jonah Kilhio, Duke Kahanamoku, and Mary Kawena Kupui. The museum's inclusion of these influential Hawaiian-Americans sends an uplifting message: thanks to brave, far sighted individuals like these, Hawaiian culture is not dead (Scotti, 2015, p. 24).

Scotti also notes an observation I made myself on this final floor of the museum: featured centrally amongst the colonial regalia, military equipment, and other artefacts of Western ascendancy is a quilt embroidered with upside down Hawaiian state flags, a symbol of protest and national distress (Scotti, 2015).

Taro was not the only cultural element experiencing a resurgence following the Hawaiian Renaissance. The Hawaiian language, threatened with *de jure* linguicide for the better part of a century, was added to the state education curriculum in 1978 and is now widely taught in public schools. People converse in Hawaiian, alongside Hawaiian Pidgin, as practical use of the language is once again becoming accepted, widespread, and even fashionable. Many areas, rural and urban alike, have bilingual signs and advertisements. Daily life is conducted almost exclusively in the Hawaiian language on the island of Ni’ihau. It is as a reminder that the islands have their own history, their own culture, as historic and prevalent as the more ubiquitous Western influences.

Conclusion

I would contend that the Hawaiian Movement's greatest and most lasting contribution is the renewal and promotion of the concept of *aloha 'āina* (Trask, 1987). This was the defining principle behind the Hawaiians' care and use of their environment, not strictly limited to taro. *Aloha 'āina* means "love of the land". Now, often seen on the rear bumper of cars, t shirts, and surfboards as shown in Figure 3.5, the concept goes back to the time of the ancient Hawaiians. It was integral to many of the chants and oral traditions to denote the relationship between the people and the land. Then, as now, Hawaiians understood the precarious nature of their own existence. The islands were not conducive to sustaining human life unassisted. It was not enough to merely hope that the environment would provide; humans had to actively maintain a system of regenerative agriculture. Taro's creation story emphasizes this point as well – one brother relies on the other brother. To overburden the environment means repercussions for humans.

Hawaii is "home to a movement of indigenous resurgence, where community-based revitalization projects centered on traditional Kānaka Maoli (Indigenous Hawaiian) food production systems have been expanding over the past several decades." (Kurashima, Fortini, & Ticktin, 2019, p. 1). When the Hawaiian Renaissance emerged, and those ancient concepts of environmental knowledge and sustainability were being evoked, *aloha 'āina* became the message around which the movement would rise. And no other plant demonstrated the principles, and benefits, of *aloha 'āina* more than taro. Its sensitivity to urbanization demonstrates the immediate, tangible effects of environmental degradation. But when prudently maintained, taro harmonizes the people and the land. The requirements of growing taro are demonstrations of what is necessary to safeguard the environment. The

maintenance of waterways, the turning of the soil, and the encouragement of biodiversity above and below the *lo'i* are integral to, and a benefit of, taro cultivation. It is in this environmental knowledge and preservation that Hawaiians assert their cultural reclamation and resistance to the hegemony that had once decimated their culture. And the symbol of the vanguard is a humble root vegetable, the predecessor of all humankind.

Figure 3.5. "God Bless our 'Aina" spray-painted on the remains of an abandoned military installation near Ka Lae, South Point, Island of Hawaii. This structure was part of the Morse Field complex and was abandoned by the early 1980s. The only Hawaiian word employed by the artist, 'aina, carries a significant amount of meaning, particularly when tagged on a former military base.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Summary and reflections

I began this thesis with the question of how does taro's role in pre-contact and post-contact Hawaii lend its allegoric value to Hawaiian resistance to Western hegemony. I also stated that my intention was to illustrate this idea by exploring the following objectives: 1) to explore the implications of taro as a symbol of resistance; 2) to critically examine how themes of indigenous resistance and traditional agricultural practices connect to daily Hawaiian life; and 3) to explore the historical context of taro's cultural significance and how the plant lends itself as a modern symbol of Hawaiian identity and resistance to colonialism. I believe I have demonstrated that taro is not just a symbol of Hawaiian resistance to globalism and Western hegemony, it is the foremost representation of maintaining the authentic indigenous culture and asserting the Native Hawaiian identity.

My research has shown that the practice of taro cultivation has pervaded every aspect of Hawaiian society for over a thousand years. As shown particularly in Chapter 2, taro is far more than a plant and transcends subsistence agriculture. Every component of planting, maintaining, and processing taro reaches into the broader society and is emblematic of the Hawaiian way of life. By nature of this, as shown in the final paragraphs of Chapter 3, taro cultivation becomes an act of resistance when actively practiced under a hegemony that seeks to displace the indigenous culture. It is my hope that this thesis has shown that the traditional method of taro cultivation is a form of passive resistance.

Modifying the old ways is not necessary, nor desired; the message of protest is in its authenticity.

The extent to which Hawaiian society was dependent upon taro prior to Western contact is well documented in this thesis and other academic texts. What was a new revelation for me in the course of this research was how the revitalization of taro farming in the last few decades has taken on a public education role, as explained in Chapter 3. Taro's use as a food source seems to be secondary to its symbolic and educational value. It has become the medium by which the Hawaiian values and culture, outlined in Chapter 2, are conveyed. This is not to imply that taro is not widely consumed across the islands; demand for taro products far outpaces supply in the markets and grocery stores. However, to consume a small bowl of *poi* is in itself a small act of defiance, the nutritional value overshadowed by the symbolic value. To consume taro is to assert a connection to a place. Additionally, to farm taro asserts the same environmental connection and, as the grower, a certain responsibility is assumed to educate others of this plant's significance. A farmer remarked to me, "It isn't just about producing taro. It is about the periphery challenges. The clearing, the damming." My co-supervisor for this thesis perfectly expressed this notion – "It's the practice, not the product."

Another aspect of this topic that was a new, yet hardly surprising, discovery for me is how it is connected to earlier acts of resistance in the United States. As I have outlined in Chapter 1, the Hawaiian movement took many of its principles and methods from the Civil Rights Movement and American Indian Movement. Utilizing the concepts of nonviolent mass action fundamental to the Civil Rights Movement, combined with the Indigenous American viewpoint unique to the American Indian Movement, the Hawaiians

fashioned their own movement emphasizing what was uniquely important to them. As shown in Chapter 1, the Hawaiian movement was a branch of the larger context of resistance in the United States throughout the 20th century and followed the pattern of previous movements. And, further following the model of other movements, the Hawaiians tailored theirs to accentuate their own cultural history as well as to rectify sociocultural issues that were directly connected to the hegemony. This was explained in Chapter 3 with taro featuring prominently in education programs, revitalization of the Hawaiian language, and increased attention to land tenure discourse.

I also learned the extent to which taro cultivation is a deeply personal endeavor for the growers and processors. Their lives and families are dedicated to maintaining their farms and plants. The plants, in various stages of their lifecycles, occupy their homes as if they were another family member, evoking the ancient Hawaiian creation story.

In the process of examining how the cultivation of taro connects to Native Hawaiian resistance, my research produced a clear delineation between what I know and what I do not know. There are remaining questions that I was unable to answer and necessitate future research. The key question amongst these is the matter of who is growing taro in Hawaii. There is a significant demand for taro products and it is extremely common for even a well-stocked grocery store to deplete its taro supplies in a few days. Still, the fact remains that taro products exist in Hawaii and somebody is attempting to meet that demand. Are family farms, such as the ones I worked with on the Island of Hawaii where the majority of Hawaii's family farms are located, the primary growers? Or is taro mostly grown and produced by industrial-level farms, such as Hawaii's largest taro farm on Kauai described to me by one farmer as "the beast of *kalo*"? This evokes questions of taro's traditional

status in Hawaii. Is it possible to commercialize this product that was once avoided by commercial farmers due to its low profitability? And if so, what impact does this have taro's *mana*? Does commercialization and producing taro on an industrial scale reduce its efficacy as a uniquely Hawaiian symbol? Or is this indicative of Hawaiian efforts to have their culture featured as prominently as any other import? Even further, how much of Hawaii's taro products, if any, are imported? In a grocery store in O'ahu, amongst the various brands of Hawaiian taro chips, I found one that was produced in California and another imported from Fiji. Lastly, what does the future of Hawaiian resistance look like? Will taro feature as prominently as it has in the last few decades? In the last year, Hawaiian sovereignty movements have featured prominently in international news with the mass action being taken around the proposed telescope construction on top of Mauna Kea. Resistance to these plans have seen Hawaiians taking action and emphasizing the native culture, primarily environmental and land tenure issues. We are seeing a reimagining of the same issues outlined in Chapter 1 that gave birth to the Hawaiian Renaissance in the Kalama Valley in the 1970s, adapted by a new generation to encompass the modern geopolitical order and technology. I cannot speculate on what issues Hawaiians may face in the future. However, I will make the assertion that it will most certainly be directly tied to the environment. The old ways implore it.

Food and resistance: Implications for the future

Food systems are deeply engrained in all cultures, connecting to every component within the culture and extending outside of that culture. Food is where human culture and the environment converge. A great deal of spirituality and culture is demonstrated in our

food. No other species cooks. Our food is the foundation, the product, and the enabler of civilization. It is a cooperative venture that is bigger than an individual. Food compels humans to rely on others, for better or worse, and to think beyond our own individual needs.

Food and its production has a history in resistance movements. Celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain once remarked, “Food is everything we are. It's an extension of nationalist feeling, ethnic feeling, your personal history, your province, your region, your tribe, your grandma. It's inseparable from those from the get-go.” Food and culture academic Leda Cooks writes, “Regardless of the circumstances which produced them, historical and current narratives reveal that performances of and through food were complexly located in spaces where marginalized bodies…were increasingly objectified: where food came to stand in and for both compliance and resistance to the dominant forces in the culture.” (Cooks, 2009, p. 95). In the case of Hawaii, as shown, taro stood as a symbolic resistance to Western hegemony. The more tangible details of Western control over Hawaii were, save for a few plants earmarked for more ornate uses such as sandalwood, to produce other plants intended for consumption. Taro was not the only plant in Hawaii with symbolic value; an argument, from a postcolonial perspective, could be made for the transformative value of non-indigenous plants such as sugar, pineapple, and rice.

Cooks writes “Food is symbolically powerful because it is a necessity for survival…” (Cooks, 2009, p. 95). Food is of vital importance to us all so it is little wonder that such intimate connections are formed between humans and food systems. It is a common denominator. This thesis focuses solely on the case of Hawaiian taro and resistance. However, recent history has seen other cases that are not entirely dissimilar to

the Hawaiian story. The American Civil Rights Movement realized the potential of food as a medium of resistance. Lunch counters, denied to Black Americans, were the setting for some of the earliest sit-ins and demonstrations. The establishment of the Black Panthers was predicated on protecting black people from police brutality; however, the group soon expanded its purview to self-determination through social agendas that included free breakfast programs and food parcel distribution in economically downtrodden areas. Resistance and survival became one in the same.

As intersectional issues of climate change, food scarcity, and post-colonialism are becoming increasingly prominent, food is taking on a role as a "communicative medium" of resistance (Sutton, Naguib, Vournelis, & Dickinson, 2013, p. 346). This is particularly the case with relegated indigenous cultures, amongst which "…food has become a key symbol of the "traditions" that many feel are being threatened by forces of globalization…" (Sutton et al, 2013, p. 346).

Food, specifically taro, was the symbol by which Hawaiians demonstrated their resistance to Western hegemony in the islands. Other components of Hawaiian culture were also emphasized, particularly during the Hawaiian Renaissance. Sports, dance, dress, language, and cosmology were revived to preserve the old ways and demonstrate the efficacy of a culture that predated the one threatening to eradicate it. Hawaiian historian Isaiah Helekunihi Walker writes, "…through creative, metaphoric, and often unrecognized means, Hawaiians…found ways to resist colonialism." (Walker, 2005, p. 601). It has been my argument and the purpose of this thesis, however, that the practice of growing taro is the most prevalent and unifying of all these cultural themes.

Taro is emblematic of every aspect of the Native Hawaiian traditions and values. Additionally, a "taro culture" encompasses everybody in the society, whether or not they are directly involved in its growth and processing as food. A farmer said to me, "How we grow food is an indicator of how we relate as a community." This was shown in Chapter 2 with taro's pervasiveness reaching all facets of the Hawaiian social order. Surfing or *hula*, for example, are unique Hawaiian cultural themes that have been emphasized as expressions of identity, particularly since the 1970s. Both of these are fascinating and critical components of the Hawaiian culture; however, they only encapsulate parts of the assemblage that comprise the Hawaiian cultural identity. They illustrate cultural themes of language, sport, cosmology, environmental cognizance, kinship, and indigenous knowledge. While these are of critical importance, other cultural components are excluded. This is not intended to detract from the cultural prominence of surfing and hula; both carry equal weight in cultural identity expression and, by extension, resistance to hegemony. Taro, however, captures these same themes and expands to include food production systems, land tenure, resource management, and a broadened social and legal structure. Taro farming, by its very nature, is the most "Hawaiian thing" a person can do.

Beyond the *lo'i*: Concluding thoughts

In this thesis, I hope to have explored the well-researched subjects of indigenous knowledge and resistance from a unique and understudied perspective. I feel it must be noted, however, that the perception of Hawaiians should not be one of people engaged in perpetual struggle for its own sake. While it is my argument that taro is a symbol of Hawaiian opposition, I hope to have demonstrated that it is also much more. Taro is the

lynchpin of Hawaiian indigenous knowledge. Their thoughts, beliefs, and customs are represented by this single plant. Does that include defiance of a hegemonic order? Absolutely. However, that is not the totality of taro's role.

Historian Michael Davis writes, "…that what is today called 'Indigenous heritage' was often thought of by outsiders…as comprising essentially the physical aspects of Indigenous culture…To Indigenous people, however, their heritage is also the 'habits, laws, beliefs, and legends', and much more besides." (Davis, 2007, p. xiii). Cultivation of taro is a fragment of the Hawaiian material culture, yet it is inclusive of the broader Hawaiian culture. While taro is a key theme in a discussion of Hawaiian agriculture, it is my hope that this thesis has shown the numerous other aspects of Hawaiians that taro has connections to. As this quote applies to the case of the Hawaiians, what should be noted is that taro cultivation is emblematic of the less tangible catalogue of Hawaiian intellectual culture. It represents how they shape, and are shaped by, their environment. For centuries, Hawaii was an archipelago universe unto itself; when this essential plant nearly disappeared, it was tantamount to a loss of culture. The subsequent mass trauma to their identity compelled resistance from the Hawaiians. Though taro was a fragment of the culture, it became an overarching symbol of Hawaiian resistance because it holistically encapsulated the broader context of the Hawaiian culture.

The ancient Pacific Islanders are well-known for their navigational mastery and seamanship. It is common, almost fashionable, to remark on their perilous voyages into the unknown expanses of the Pacific Ocean. Perhaps there is something romantic about their success and its contradiction with Western ways – the islanders utilizing a low-tech method that displayed a masterful knowledge of the seas, stars, currents, clouds, and marine life;

whereas the European sailor supplemented a similar environmental knowledge with the engineered products of Western society (Kanahele, 1986). And rightfully so, as it is quite a feat to pilot an outrigger canoe across such a vast and seemingly empty world as the Pacific. But the awe seems to end when these people made landfall. At sea, they are cunning and adaptive; but on land, the narrative implies, they display nothing remarkable and certainly not on par with the "civilized worlds" of the Europeans or Americans. In these pages we have examined the Hawaiian mastery of the land as being comparable to that of the seas.

Of the many images we conjure when imagining ancient Hawaii, we tend to forego the realities and focus on the whimsical. It is forgivable, as the idyllic setting and Western notions of the Pacific Ocean tend to converge and produce images of quaint villagers in an island paradise, ebbing and flowing with history like the tides that define their islands. While one may argue that if there is a degree of truth in this description, it is nowhere near the entire story. The postcard image of the Hawaiian Islander is well established; what is tragically less emphasized is the Hawaiian Botanist and the Hawaiian Engineer. These were the true architects of the remarkably sophisticated ancient Hawaiian society - a society built upon *lo'i kalo.*

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